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SERMONS,

PRACTICAL AND DOCTRINAL,

BY THE LATE

ELIJAH PARISH, D. D.

WITH A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE

AUTHOR.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY CROCKER & BREWSTER,
No. 50, Cornhill.
1826.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit:
District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-eighth day of April, A. D. 1826, in the fiftieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, *Moses P. Parish*, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, *to wit:*

"Sermons, Practical and Doctrinal. By the late Elijah Parish, D. D. With a Biographical Sketch of the Author."

In Conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intitled, 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies, of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act, intitled, "An act supplementary to an act, intitled, An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical, and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,
Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

The remark, which Addison, in the first number of the Spectator, has so playfully made, that a reader never peruses a book with satisfaction until he knows the personal qualities of the author, seems to be peculiarly true when applied to orations and sermons. In reading a spoken composition, our recollections of fancy naturally recur to the speaker. We either remember his manner and read every sentence in connexion with it, or, if we have had no knowledge of the author, we supply the deficiency by a picture of the imagination. We hear, in the *ear of the* mind, the fervour and eloquence with which he poured forth his thought. His cadence, his mien, his gestures accompany every period, and mingle with every sentiment. In cases, therefore, in which the imagination must be busy, it is important that it should be guided by truth; and since these Discourses will not suffer from the

reader's possessing the most vivid conception of the author's utterance and character, we shall prefix to them a short account of his life. We write not a biography, but a sketch.

Elijah Parish was born in Lebanon, Con. Nov. 7, 1762. His parentage was respectable; but like most other scholars in New-England, he was obliged to struggle with difficulties in obtaining a classical education. In political history, it has long been observed, that the founder of a dynasty may be distinguished, by his superiour vigour of mind, from one born in the purple and inheriting a throne. The same is true of two classes of scholars. The superiority is always found among those who have acquired energy, by conquering difficulties. Man must be goaded to exertion by the scourge of necessity. He was graduated at Dartmouth College, 1785. He chose the study of divinity for his pursuit. It is probable at this time, that religion had made an impression, salutary and lasting, on his mind and heart. On this subject he was remarkably unostentatious. He laid claim to no vivid hopes or powerful excitements. The story therefore of his progress in personal religion is now unknown. But we need not lament the loss. The only piety which he taught, or professed to prize, was such as could be attested by the fruits.*

In his youth there were no Theological Seminaries in this country. He pursued his studies under the direction of Rev. Ephraim Judson, of Taunton, Mass.

* Since writing the above, testimonies have been received from Mr. Pemberton, his early instructer, and Rev. Mr. Kellogg, of Portland, to his early piety and scholarship.

If Dr. Parish rose to eminence in his profession, his merit can never be appreciated, unless we consider the obstacles of the times, in which he came forward. Young theologians can have no conception of those difficulties, as they are now taught in richly endowed seminaries, partaking of the prosperity of the country. In his youth, war, confusion, national distraction and poverty disturbed the seats of science, and opposed the young candidate's progress both in the paths of learning and religion. In the year 1787, Dr. Parish was settled in Byfield, a parish in the town of Newbury, Mass. His early settlement affords probable evidence of his youthful popularity.

The life of a humble preacher of truth, placed in a peaceful village and engaged in a circle of duties, which, though arduous, are still similar, cannot be supposed to be crowded with events which sparkle in narrative. The calling of Dr. Parish was honourable; he made it laborious; and he appears to have experienced in his ministry that blessing, which is prayed for in the formula of the English church, that God would pour upon his people the continual dew of his blessing. It was not his aim in preaching to make an impression on his people, which should adorn a narrative in a newspaper. He was a gradual builder, but his materials were solid stone. *The continual dew of a divine blessing* is an expression, which best describes the effect of his instruction. Yet twice in his ministry a peculiar solemnity pervaded his parish. In the earlier part of his life, he encountered difficulties among his people,—when he died, there was not a more united parish in the state. He was indeed a

man peculiarly fitted to act in those scenes which try men's souls. Decided in his views and firm in his spirit, he walked in the path of danger with an undaunted heart. It is a rare event in modern times that a clergyman is called to give such specimens of Christian courage.—He boldly took his stand on the pedestal of duty, nor was it the threats, or sneers of an opposing world, that would induce him to leave it. This was courage of the noblest kind; it is the very resolution which a minister's profession requires.—Thousands, who have faced the dangers of battle, have been timid here. The teachers of religion, if they mean to fill their station, must copy our departed father, and to a holy heart add an independent mind.

He was a diligent and successful student. Judging from effects, we should conclude that Dr. Parish was a man that seldom found an idle hour. He had a mind which was uncommonly vigorous, and he was uncommonly diligent to cultivate it. He was not one of those ministers who close their books when they leave the college, and who, if they can satisfy their people, are satisfied themselves. His learning, as was to be expected, was of the last age rather than this; yet as a student, few were ever more industrious. Many of his works are before the public, and of these it is not necessary to speak. His most striking quality was his eloquence. In his happiest efforts, few equalled, and none could surpass him. Without those thrilling tones, which sometimes make sound supply the deficiencies of thought, and the most flimsy performances pass for excellence, he led the intelligent

ear from sentence to sentence, in which religion was recommended by beauty, and instruction increased by delight. He riveted attention to his theme ; the friends of truth were confirmed in their views, and those who rejected his arguments, acknowledged his power. His style was vivid; abounding in expressions which sunk on the memory, and illustrations, which reached the heart. Every object of usefulness, or sublimity, which he presented, was more than recognized, it was seen and felt. Nothing was cold—nothing languid. He was an orator in the highest sense of the word. The impression which he made on the hearers in public, was repeated on the reader in his closet. He came nearer to Massilon than to Whitefield. He could not have melted the colliers of Bristol; nor arrested the attention of the commonalty of Scotland; but in a refined auditory, few could speak to more acceptance, or leave a deeper impression on the heart.

But he is gone—that eloquent tongue shall speak to us no more—or rather he speaks to us in another language. He tells us in the dialect of the dead, that gifts are nothing without graces—that in the world, to which he has departed, they ask not what talents a mortal has possessed, but how he has used them.

This venerable and departed man was a *faithful* minister—the best evidence, in his profession, of his being a true Christian; and let me add, that he formed an extensive conception of what faithful preaching is. He left no part of duty untouched, no sin uncensured. He endeavoured to occupy the whole ground, displayed in the bible: and to make his in-

structions as extensive as the wants of man. Though belonging in his youth, and perhaps in his age, to a theological school, which has been charged with dwelling too exclusively on a few favourite points, he was not a narrow preacher. He could reason and feel; comfort the Christian or alarm the sinner; inculcate faith, or insist on good works. His mind was replenished with the fulness of the gospel. In this respect I hardly know his equal. If the narrowness of controversial divinity makes this mode of preaching almost an experiment in religion, we may say the experiment was peculiarly happy. Dr. Parish was the instrument of turning many to righteousness.

In his person, he was below the middle stature. His eye was keen and piercing; and left on the observer, at the first interview, an impression of sarcasm and severity. It is true, no man could give a quicker reply, or had a repartee more at command, than Dr. Parish. He could be severe, when severity was necessary; yet in friendly intercourse he always softened into an intelligent and agreeable companion. In his conversation, there was opposition enough to call forth conflicting opinions; and urbanity enough to make the conflict not unpleasant.

When he mounted the pulpit to speak, he so far resembled Ulysses, as to awaken no high expectation in the mind of the stranger. His commencing utterance appeared rather monotonous; and, in the first verse of the hymn, or the first sentence of the discourse, there was a tone which savoured of senility. But as he proceeded, warmed by his subject, every vestige of this fault vanished—he became

animated, emphatic, glowing. He was fired himself, and never failed to fire his audience. Yet there was nothing of that *overstepping the modesty of nature* by which some popular speakers acquire their eminence. There was nothing disproportionate in his speaking; of the truth of which, this is a proof; that young preachers, who studied under him, never gave the distorted features of his eloquence in disgusting imitation.

As he was a decided man, he was obliged, like all other decided men, in some parts of his life, to wade through the waters of opposition. His activity in politics acquired for him many enemies. Whether he was right in taking such a prominent stand on a subject not immediately connected with religion, we shall not say. He shewed, at least, his decision. It is proper, however, to reveal the whole truth; in the latter part of his life, he wholly renounced all concern with political affairs. To a friend, who once spoke to him on the subject, he replied, "Politics is like the variolous contagion, no man catches it a second time."

With respect to the religious suspicion and obloquy, to which he was, for a time subjected, we may speak with more confidence. It arose from his independence of character; from his refusing to bow down to the popular idols of the day. He was a friend to religious liberty; he would have the human mind assailed by no arms but those of persuasion and truth. This makes his loss almost inestimable. In this age, when some good men seem to have forgotten the purpose for which our fathers crossed the ocean, and

erected, with infinite hazard, these western churches, on principles as free as the spirit of benevolence itself,—his influence and example seem peculiarly necessary. He found the happy medium of mixing decision of sentiment, with candour to those who differed from him. In his mind, as in that of the great Watts, orthodoxy and charity were beautifully combined. The truths embraced by our fathers, he believed to be infinitely important to the happiness of man; yet he was cautious of judging of intentions. In declaring opinions, he spoke with confidence; but persons he left to the tribunal of God.*

He considered both the great parties which now divide our country as, in many respects, wrong; yet he always boldly said that the genius of christianity resided with the orthodox. Unitarianism, in his mind, was a system, not without its plausible pretensions to a speculative mind. If man had no sins,

To illustrate our manners, if ever this book should fall into the hands of a foreigner, let me mention in a note, a circumstance which is certainly unworthy of a place in the text. In Massachusetts, for a few years past, all ecclesiastical measures have been prepared in a certain conclave, nobody knows who they are, or where they are,—invisible beings,—congregational cardinals, to whose decrees every orthodox clergyman and church is expected to pay unlimited deference and submission. But as they are wholly destitute of power, they have found out a singular way of executing their laws. The clergyman, who hesitates, or dares to think, or act for himself, suddenly finds himself surrounded by the whisper, that he is becoming an *Unitarian*. It is not easy to conceive the horrour and dismay, that this suggestion occasions. It is caught from mouth to mouth, and whispered from ear to ear, and every ghastly relater increases the terrours of the tale. The poor, affrighted victim must either return to the bosom of the church,—the popular measure of the day,—or be denounced a heretic, worthy of all the flames that detraction can kindle: for, in this country, we burn heretics in no other. I will only add, that this state of society is rather amusing; to say nothing of the magnanimity of the *great men*, who condescend to use such weapons, it is singular enough to see to what useful purpose the Unitarians may be put; they not only serve as whetstones, on which staunch polemics may sharpen their weapons, but they make excellent bugbears to keep naughty boys in order. O the follies of the wise!

no sorrows, neither sickness, nor death, he might sit down and admire the schemes of modern innovators, as the traveller admires the morning rays refracted around the ice and snow of some mountain's top; but these beams, though bright, awaken no vegetation; he considered this system as wholly inadequate to the wants and agonies of a mind really awake to eternal things. Faith wishes to repose on something more substantial. He always said, however, that the mode of opposing this system was not the best. Whilst it is a novelty, and whilst therefore its advocates can avail themselves of the ambiguous ground that lies between innovation and improvement, he said it might prevail. But it would soon become the old religion; and have to drop its accidental pretensions, and encounter all the obstacles with which the old religion has now to contend, without any of its advantages. It could then no longer be said, "See what improvement we are making; see what old prejudices we are overthrowing." *Falsa satiabunt.* The cloud is temporary, the sunshine eternal. Refrain from these men, and let them alone. Acts v. 38.

Dr. Parish was married to Miss Mary Hale, in 1796, by whom he has children; three of whom survive him. In the year 1819, he was called to bury a very amiable daughter, a heavy affliction. This event was never spoken of afterward but with the deepest sympathy.

He was frequently called to preach on public occasions. Before the legislature in 1810, the Election sermon; before the convention 1821. This last sermon will be found in this collection.

In his last sickness, he was seen by the writer of this biographical notice. His intellect was partially clouded, but not entirely lost. He was a sufferer, but patient, tranquil, serene. He had always, in his healthy days, expressed an opinion that death was an event not to be trifled with; and he doubted whether the indifference with which some good men professed to regard it, is not the result of ignorance rather than grace. He pronounced himself never to be above fear. Yet when he was asked, on the day before his expiration, what were his views, he replied, "For reasons which appear to me to be just, I rather wish to live; yet I leave the event with God. Not my will, but his be done." He died October 15th, 1825; and was followed to the grave by the esteem of his friends, and the tears of his people.

Besides occasional sermons, the works by which he has already appeared before the public, are: The Gazetteer of the Eastern continent, the History of New England, Modern Geography, and Gazetteer of the Bible.

These discourses are now presented to the public, to pass that wider test of criticism, which results from a general perusal. In the vicinity of the author's ministrations, they have been heard with great approbation and delight. It was always an exhilaration to an audience of taste, to see the author of these discourses enter the pulpit. Expectation was highly raised, and seldom disappointed. It was remarked, in several places, where some of these longest sermons were preached, that the hour was almost anni-

hilated in the interest it excited. It is true, in different spheres, an author meets with different competitors, and is therefore estimated in a different manner. How this volume will be received by the world, we cannot say; but we should feel little solicitude, if its reception should be according to its merits.

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SERMON I.

LUKE ii. 14.

On earth, peace; good will towards men.

Jesus Christ is the Prince of peace, the light of the world, the Saviour of man. Other benefactors have been useful. They have civilized savage tribes; they have extended science and commerce, and established empires. They have founded churches, banished idols from their temples, and extinguished the fire on the altars of human sacrifice. But these benevolent efforts are limited, partial, and transient in their effects. While one side of the globe enjoys the sunshine of science and civilization, the other may be wrapped in darkness and barbarism. Where are the empires, which once promised to be as lasting as their mountains?

The pacific reign of Jesus Christ will be as extensive, as the world, and continue as long, as the sun and moon shall endure. Long ages before the advent of the Messiah, patriarchs rejoiced in his day. Prophets and poets foretold, that the iron age of crimes and

tears was passing away, that the golden era was advancing, when peace would descend from heaven, the lion sport with the lamb, and the child play with the serpent.

Sages admonished their disciples, to wait the coming of a superiour teacher. Historians announced his expected approach. Angels came down from the throne of God, with the news of his birth. The shepherds heard the music of their song, "Peace on earth, and good will towards men."

Doctrine; It is the design of God, by the gospel of Christ, to establish lasting peace through the world.

I. I presume, that God determines to establish universal peace, because he has promised, that the *holiness* of the gospel shall be universal.

"All flesh shall come and worship before me, saith the Lord." "The Lord shall be king over *all* the earth." "Upon the bells of the horses shall be holiness to the Lord." Such extensive piety *has* not been known. This improvement of mankind will be effected by the gospel. "Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ," and "in him shall all the families be blest." The gospel is a system of morals and religion, designed to render men moral and religious. But war annuls the precepts of religion, repeals the statutes of morality, confounds right and wrong. While war prevails, the gospel cannot have its full effect.

The gospel requires men to do *good*. The very business of war is mischief and damage. The gospel requires men to forgive their enemies. Revenge is often the chief design of war. The gospel commands men to feed the poor and comfort the afflicted. The

sword drinks the blood of the afflicted, robs and plunders the poor, covers him with wounds, and leaves him half dead. Truth and sincerity are precepts of the gospel, and are reputable in the dwellings of peace; but the warriour glories in executing the work of destruction by artifice, by delusion, and stratagem.

While the devout Christian sits *pondering* how he may comfort the sorrowful, enlighten the ignorant, and reform the wicked, the man of blood is contriving and plotting, to vanquish yonder army, to ravage the country, covering the fields with the wounded and the dead.

The gospel forbids murder. Yes, it does. But is not this the grand purpose of war? Why else all the swords, and balls, and engines of death? The combination of ten thousand men, to slay ten thousand, is not less *murderous*, than the resolution of one man to slay one man. Had Cain been a king, and marched an army to destroy his brother, would this have lessened his guilt?

Did God not include kings, when he said, "Thou shalt not kill?" Did he not include their victorious legions? If one man may not commit murder, how many must unite to make it innocent and glorious? May two,—two hundred,—two million? Two million have no more right to murder and destroy, than two individuals.

When pure Christianity shall cover the earth, avarice and revenge will be extinguished; ambition will be dethroned, and war expire. The acknowledged design of the Christian religion is to induce men to love their enemies, to be like Jesus Christ, who re-

sisted not evil. Is it possible for such a man, to seize his sword, and rush to the hill of battle? Can he bid the artillery blaze? Can he become the angel of death, and scatter plague and pestilence round the globe? When all rulers possess this benevolence, who will proclaim the war? When commanders have this spirit, who will order the battle? When the mass of mankind have the spirit of Christ, where will soldiers be found? Where will you find a *man* to slay his neighbour?

The rendezvous is forsaken. The shrill piercing, hoarse rattling instruments, the harsh clattering sounds of martial bands, are silent, as the deserted field of battle, where death riots in dismal solitude. All are gone to the house of worship, to celebrate the jubilee of peace, to join in the song of angels. Will they ever again carry fire, famine, and destruction into peaceful countries, the dwellings of helpless women, the mothers in Israel, the daughters of Jerusalem? For such a barbarous invasion, they must tear the last fibre of benevolence from their hearts, quench the last spark of humanity, kindle the flame of malice and *revenge*. These are the passions, which push men on in the trade of war; these are the furies, which rule the man, in the rage of battle. Will not Christianity, when it shall become universal, arrest the ravages of war, and establish lasting peace?

II. From the benevolent efforts, now made in the Christian world, I infer the entire suppression of war.

I do not mean, that any thing absolutely new is taking place. Somewhat of this kind has been done in almost every age of the Christian church. But

present exertions are probably more extensive and better directed, than in any former time.

The exertions of Christian philanthropy are not confined to a sect, or a country. To the Protestant nations, and to the Greek church, a mighty impulse has been given. Many members of the Latin church, and some of them dignitaries, are coming forward to reform the world. Children and matrons, who receive charity themselves, bring their offerings to the treasury of the Lord. Ministers of religion and officers of government, rich men and nobles, suspend their own pursuits; princes leave their palaces, and kings come down from their thrones, to assist the corporations of benevolence. These societies, though by different paths, are all marching to the same point, the peace of the world.

If the Bible Societies obtain their object, peace will follow; for peace is commanded in their sacred volume. If the Missionary Societies succeed, peace will follow; for the gospel requires peace. If the Education or Literary Societies accomplish their hopes, peace will triumph; for the great object of education is to enlighten the mind and direct the life. If religion or science gain the empire of the human mind, the reign of peace is established; for all rational religion and useful science breathe the spirit of peace.

If twelve fishermen changed the moral complexion of the world, in spite of the laws, the religion, and the vices of paganism, what may we not expect from the present movement of the Christian world!

Christianity was a helpless babe, slumbering in a manger of Bethlehem; she is now a giant, rejoicing

to run her course. Her friends were a handful of poor, illiterate Nazarenes; they are now an innumerable host, possessing a great portion of the power, the science, and the wealth of the world.

A vast accession of influence is acquired by the union of numbers, by voluntary associations.

Can all these engines move in vain? Would the God of wisdom produce all these labours to no lasting purpose? Would he create all these luminaries, to go out in darkness? Pouring their beams in one direction, must they not scatter the clouds of war, dispel the darkness, and melt the vapours into a day of light, of peace, and glory?

III. God has promised his people a period of security and felicity, not compatible with a state of warfare; hence I infer that wars must cease.

"They shall build houses, and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat;—mine elect shall *long* enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble. They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid."

These and similar passages need no comment. They describe a state of comfort and security, which can never be known, while a banner waves, or a sword glitters in the hands of a warriour. Does any people enjoy such rest and felicity in the atmosphere of armies? Do those, who are defeated, conquered, vanquished, fleeing, falling, dying? Do the peaceful inhabitants, alarmed and driven from their homes?

The field of war is like the fabled sea of Sodom, in whose atmosphere no creature could live; along whose dismal coast no fruit nor blossom was seen, no cheerful voice was heard. So in the region of war, no sound is heard but the riot of victory, the shout of revenge, the sigh of misery, the shriek of horrour, or the groan of death. The dwellings of war are like those of Egypt, when solid darkness covered the land; when no man could safely leave his home; when death was in every house; terrour and dismay in every heart.

Were these sufferings confined to men, to *military* men, we might be patient; but another portion of the human family, whose sex renders them more defenceless; whose gentle voice cheers the distressed; whose kindness binds up the wounds of an enemy; whose piety soothes the anguish of his last moment, woman, is often overwhelmed in the miseries of war. How often may it be said, "From the daughter of Zion, all her beauty is departed. Her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers, she has none to comfort her. *She has fallen by the sword.*"

History confirms all this. Glance an eye at a single short series. What was the state of the Canaanites, assailed and subdued by Joshua? What was the state of the Jews, vanquished and led captive by Vespasian? What was the state of the Romans, overrun and conquered by the barbarians of the north? What has been the condition of these conquerors, during the wars of modern Europe?

Read again the history of those revolutions, and say—I think, I hear you say, "War is a monster.

more enormous than the fabled giants of old, who piled up the mountains to scale the heavens. While he walks on earth, his head wrapt in clouds, his arms encircle the world. From one hand he hurls all the weapons of destruction; from the other he scatters the seeds of famine, plague, and pestilence. He beholds a country of prosperous husbandmen and merchants; he robs and plunders, and leaves them wretched. He devours an army, and cries, 'give, give.' The sun shines; but no harvest rewards the labourer. The rain falls; but no verdure clothes the ground; the monster has trodden on the fields; his breath has blasted the country."

Yes, my friends, the picture is not so shocking as the hideous original. But, blessed be God, he has promised, that those 'who plant, shall eat the fruit.' Hence the fury of war is passing away; a brighter day is dawning. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

IV. I infer that wars will cease, when Christianity, purified, shall become universal; because the Christians, in the first ages of the gospel, refused to bear arms.

They supposed that their religion forbid war. Men, who received their religious opinions from Christ himself, or from his apostles, or their immediate successors, refused to bear arms, or perform any military duty. For about three hundred years, Christians would suffer martyrdom, rather than be seen in a camp with sword or spear.

Justin and Tatian in the second century, both declare war unlawful, and Satan its author. In the second and third centuries, Tertullian and Alexander strongly condemn the custom of war. Tertullian inquires, "Can a soldier's life be lawful, when Christ has declared, that he 'who takes the sword shall perish with the sword?' Shall he, who is not to revenge his *own* wrongs, bring others into chains and imprisonment, torment and death?"

Lactantius, the friend of Constantine, and tutor of his son, says, "It can *never* be lawful, for a righteous man to go to war, whose warfare is righteousness itself." To these names of renown, in the Christian church, we may add Cyprian, a martyr in A. D. 258, with Ambrose, Archelaus, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Cyril; all of whom were of opinion, that war was unlawful to Christians.

The *practice* of those early Christians agreed with their principles. In the rebellions against Verus and Severus, which extended from A. D. 170 to 195, the Christians were suspected. Tertullian appealed to the pagan world, and repelled the slander. "You defamed us," saith he; "not a Christian could be found in any of the rebel armies." This fact is worthy of all notice. Those armies constituted nearly half the legions of the Roman empire, stationed in Egypt, Palestine, and Britain. Yet, not a Christian soldier could be found in their ranks.

The writers of those times make a distinction between *soldiers* and *Christians*. Clemens calls Christians "the Peaceable," and says, "*They* never use sword nor bow."

About A. D. 180, Ireneus says, "The famous prophecy, 'Their swords shall be turned to ploughshares, and their spears to pruning-hooks,' was then fulfilled." "The Christians *have*," saith he, "changed their swords and their lances into instruments of peace. They know not how to fight."

Speaking of the same prophecy, Justin says, "This is fulfilled, for we, who, in time past killed one another, do not now fight with our enemies." Accordingly, Celsus, an enemy to Christianity, in the third century, brings this, as a reproach, that Christians would not bear arms for their emperor. He tells them, that if all were of their opinion, the empire would be overrun with barbarians. So do friends and foes unitedly testify that the first Christians would not bear arms.

When Constantine, a warlike prince, professed Christianity, then probably a military life became reputable with Christians. After this we find them in his armies. A dreadful change was produced.* From that period war has prevailed among the professed disciples of Christ. But though from every quarter of the globe we now hear of standing armies, they will be disbanded, and return to their peaceful homes. Though the noise of battle is yet heard, and ramparts of destruction rise in every country, those mounds shall fall; those scenes of death and desolation will be enlivened by the dwellings of domestic felicity, covered with the blossoms of spring, and the harvests of autumn. Though the ocean thunders, her billows rising with blood, those hostile navies shall return to

* See an Essay by Thomas Clarkson

their ports, to waft the heralds of peace to their appointed stations. "The Lord will bless his people with peace. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."

IMPROVEMENT.

I. Hence we learn the importance of *publishing* this final result of Christian influence.

This may kindle hope and zeal, to hasten the event. If the gospel be destined to produce universal peace, it ought to be *known*, that suitable measures may be adopted, to accomplish the object. The interesting fact ought to be proclaimed from the pulpit, from the press, from the senate, and from the throne.

The mighty theme of universal peace may well awaken the most powerful strains of human eloquence, the tongue of the learned, the pen of the ready writer, the songs of angels. When they were permitted to announce the reign of peace, they seized the moment with raptures of bliss. Shall not the angels of the churches, in the same spirit, proclaim peace on earth? Is not this the Gospel? Did not the angels understand the gospel?

II. Does not the subject afford encouragement to multiply Peace Societies.

Peace, and all its blissful effects, must be produced by human exertions. No irresistible charm, no secret incantation, no miraculous voice, will silence the fury of war. No. The blessings of peace must be ob-

tained as other blessings are. As science, wealth, or piety are, by persevering effort and self-denial. The day of enthusiasm has gone by. We do not slumber on the couch of the sluggard to procure the favours of heaven; but we go forth to seek them. Vigorous and extensive means will introduce universal peace. These societies are powerful means. They embody a mass of sound principles, facts, and arguments. They may influence public opinion, and break the sword of the conqueror.

III. We learn the importance of electing rulers, who are men of peace.

Rulers are the makers of war and peace. They carry the olive branch to every door; or cover the fields with swords and spears. If the people elect men of peace for rulers, wars must stop. The people do not declare war; it is never their interest. They do not *consent*, till they are deluded and infatuated by designing men.

Were all rulers such men as the first Christians, no more blood nor treasure would be wasted; the banner of blood would no more wave over the land; our brethren would no more march to the field of battle.

Warlike rulers are the Achans of their country, the Pandora's box, which fills the world with misery. To revenge some imaginary wrong, to maintain some childish point of honour, to enlarge their territory, to advance their glory, they associate their names with scenes of havoc and carnage. They blow the trumpet; they rouse the passions; they inflame their people with the lust of plunder and revenge, and send them to the field of slaughter and death, to feast the

hawks and vultures of heaven. Will not your regard to your own interest, and your concern for your children and posterity, persuade you to elect rulers, who are lovers of peace? You are the real sovereigns of the country. Unless you require peace from your rulers, you will be accountable to God, for every drop of blood, which may be shed. Every man, who is slain in war, will be an accusing spirit before the tribunal of divine justice.

IV. Is it fancy, or do you all seem to suggest the wisdom and necessity of discouraging and suppressing all *excitements* to war. These prolong the mischief; these prevent the advance of peace.

Yes, my friends, I agree with you, that if any excitements *do* exist, they ought to be suppressed, as war itself in disguise. Destroy the means of mischief, and you destroy the mischief itself.

It may, perhaps, be reasonably inquired, whether all military honours, and titles, and rewards, have not the baleful effect of promoting war. What could more violently tempt men to the field of destruction, than *splendid* rewards? Governments well understand this art of making dupes and victims of their subjects.

Does not all martial music have the same effect, by producing delightful associations with the trade of war?

The war song of the *poet*, the harmony of his numbers, the sublimity of his style, the splendour of his descriptions, inflame the passions with the fury of battle.

Might not some historians be more useful, if they distinctly related the wickedness and miseries of war?

May I not inquire whether some of them do not, though perhaps unintentionally, sin against benevolence and humanity? With alluring eloquence, with all the magic charms of style, they describe the march of armies, the splendour of their arms, the valour of their commanders. In all the pomp of gay description, the field of action rises in distant view. The columns move; the plumes and banners wave. You hear the thunder of the battle, and the shout of victory. The grandeur of the exploits, the sublimity of the varied scenes, delight the imagination, and you applaud the murderers of your brethren. But the historian does not carry you to the *spot*. You do not hear the cries and shrieks of the wounded. You do not see the shattered limbs, the mangled bodies, the convulsive agonies of the dying;—the blood streaming,—the field red,—no physician,—no friend to give relief or consolation. You see not the ground covered with limbs, and bodies, and heads, their ghastly visages, still marked with rage and despair.

I ask, are not all military establishments, particularly, military academies, excitements to war? Must they yet exist? Where then shall they be established? In our cities, where better principles of peace and commerce prevail? Or near our colleges, to pervert the study of the liberal sciences, and poison the waters of the sanctuary? No. Do not I hear you all say, "Rather let these seminaries of blood, these colleges of misery and murder, be erected far from the region of domestic felicity, and the pleasant walks of social life, on some mountain's lofty top, in the region of eternal winter, where the blossoms of spring were

never seen, where the tiger's yell was never heard, amid the brew of storms, and the howlings of tempests; or on the side of a smoking volcano, in the suburbs of death and destruction, where lightnings flash, and thunders burst; there let the gloomy walls of the military academy rise.

Let tombs, and graves, and bones, mark the path to this dismal spot. Let the standing army of the country, from a thousand fields of battle, transport the skulls and shattered bones of the slain, to build the fortress of their defence, to raise their own fabric. The region of Smolensk and Moscow, of Leipsic and Waterloo, present their mournful offerings. The banks of the Beresina and Rhine, of the Danube and Nile, raise their voice to be relieved from the relics of recent battles.

As these men of war proceed in their labours, instead of supplication and praise, let the war whoop and the song of death, the clang of arms and the roar of artillery announce their morning toils, their evening rest.

On their banqueting room, some artist, who delights himself with human misery, may paint the carnage of war, Nimrod, and Cæsar, and Tamerlane, with their veteran bands, covering the field with death. The blood flows; the piles of the dead rise, and shrieks of anguish torment the air.

In their apartments of rest, if such spirits ever rest, the surgeons may be drawn, with their knives and saws of amputation. The victims of battle;—streaming wounds, shattered limbs, pale visages, ghastly bodies, surround the slumbers of the young warriours.

Their passions, their thoughts, their studies, and their *dreams*, are stained with blood. Instead of reading the word of life, they are studying the volumes of death, the arts, the deceptions, and stratagems of murder and destruction. Instead of making men happy, by cultivating the arts, and extending the news of salvation, they are ripening their plots, sharpening their swords, and hardening their hearts, to make themselves adepts in the trade of blood and misery.

While the hosannas of the Sabbath ascend from the temples of peace, there the day is marked by no morning prayer, no evening sacrifice, no memorials of a Saviour's dying love. No pious traveller bids them God speed. No minister of divine mercy preaches to them peace and good will. The sacred oracles, the whispers of the Holy Spirit, the songs of Zion, the sighs of devotion, the melting strains of redeeming love, never echo from these walls, surrounded with the images of revenge and murder, of pestilence and death.

Most devoutly do we all pray, that the time may be hastened, when these mansions, like Babylon, may be left desolate, and without inhabitant; when thorns shall come up in these palaces, nettles and brambles in these fortresses, the habitation of dragons, and a court for owls, where the vulture shall seek her mate, and the satyrs dance; where no rain nor dew shall fall, the streams be pitch, and the dust brimstone; where the thistle shall shake his lonely head, the moss whistle in the wind, the fox look out at the windows, the grass of the wall waving round his head.

Why dost thou build these towers, thou man of blood? Thou lookest from thy halls to-day; yet a short time, and silence shall be in the house of war; the blast of the desert comes, and howls in thy empty courts.

Once, I saw a military parade, with a rapture of delight. Now, wiser and better men approve them, as useful and necessary. I venerate their virtues, and am persuaded they will permit me to inquire, and *anxiously* inquire, whether they are indispensable, and whether they are not powerful excitements to war? Do not the regular march, the waving standard, the sparkling armour, the animating music, array the hydra of war in the robes of pleasure? Alas! my friends, your fathers have found a field of battle, very different from a military review. Is not a review a pleasant summer sea, just ready to be roused to a furious storm, to shipwreck the mariner, to deluge the country? Is not a review a slumbering volcano, covered with blossoms, ready to burst with rivers of fire? Where, *where*, is the ruler, who will stop this moral pestilence. His name shall be enrolled in the annals of glory, his reign shall commence a new era of virtue and felicity.

> "Swift fly the years, and rise the expected morn,
> Oh spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born."

I say nothing of the vice and crimes of military days; I say nothing of their expense, which, with the peace establishment, would furnish instructors for more than two million children.

Who would mourn the loss of these days? A few warriours, wading to glory, through the blood of their

neighbours. The grave would mourn, comparatively vacant and solitary. *Death* would lament the loss of the war song and brigade review. His arm is weak, his arrow is broken; he waits the slow operations of disease and age; the monster seems expiring himself. "Where," he cries, "where is the spirit of *War?* Where is the noise and charm of military days? Where is the parade of music and battles? Oh, that it were with me, as in other times, when whole nations made arms their sport and pleasure; then I destroyed thousands and myriads in a day, as at Arbela and Pharsalia, at Jerusalem and Ashkelon, at Pavia and Warsaw."

When will men be wise; when will they suppress these occasions of war?

V. May I not say the subject calls on us to *unite* in procuring permanent peace.

Reasons for hope and confidence may well inspire the heart with zeal and energy. The gospel *will* become universal, and peace *will* finally prevail. But *means* must be used. Lazarus will rise; but the great stone must be rolled from the tomb. God will have us use *means*, even when he intends to perform a miracle.

Kings and conquerors love fame and power too well, to rest in peace, while their subjects are foolish enough to be butchered for their pleasure. Who then is *willing* to march and perish for the gratification of his rulers? Him, alas, have I offended. Who is willing to endure pain, and sickness, and death, that a few generals may be heroes; that a few commissaries

may drive their chariots, the wheels red with their blood?

Yes; that day when subjects resolve no longer to be sacrificed, peace will gladden the world. When will this day arrive? May I not call on all the disciples of Jesus, to raise their voice, to enlist under no captain; but the Captain of your salvation? I know you cherish his spirit. Mild and gentle, holy and harmless, his every act was benevolent. He came, not to destroy, but to save life. He healed the sick: he fed the poor, and *relieved the widow and the fatherless.* So, *like him*, to-day, have you come up to his house, to comfort the *widow and the fatherless*, a delightful service, for a divine Master. You hear his voice; "Ye have done it unto me." I know your benevolent wishes, and I know the limited means of many. The country is burdened; your people are burdened, with the enormous expenses of past wars, of a standing army, and preparations for wars to come. The merchant and the farmer are rifled of their best profits, to gorge the dragon of war. When this monster expires, our country will be rich; they will feed the poor, and make the widow's heart sing for joy; her barrel of meal, and her cruise of oil will never fail. Then the treasuries of our hospitals, our missionary and charitable societies, will overflow with the contributions of peace. Silver and gold will abound, as in the days of Solomon. Say then, to the weary sword, "It is enough."

But here I must not forget to urge the instructors of our schools, to impress their children with the odious nature of revenge, of ambition, and war. Im-

bue their hearts with the temper of the *lamb*. Whole countries may be saved by your mild lessons. Your children will soon be men, and form the mass of society. What they are, the nation will soon be. Immensely important is your responsibility.

I need not call on mothers or daughters, to join the celestial throng, to proclaim peace on earth. You can never patiently see your brothers, your husbands, your sons, torn away, to perish on the frozen mountains of the north, nor the burning plains of the south. In history women are renowned, as the friends of peace. In the civil wars of England, two or three thousand repaired to the House of Commons, to implore the blessings of peace. In this glorious cause will you not exert your influence in society, which is greater than senates or armed legions possess. I beseech you, with the eloquence of truth, pronounce your abhorrence of hands, which are red with the blood of the slain.

Do we not all unite in petitions of peace to our own legislators? No man can estimate the effects of their influence in private, of their votes and eloquence in public. To them we look as our guardian angels; to them we fly, for permanent peace. As men, as our representatives, as Christians, do they not give us a pledge, that we shall not be disappointed?

The Presidents, and Professors, and Preceptors in our colleges and seminaries, I congratulate, on the distinguished eminence, which they enjoy. You are forming those minds, which soon may control the public affairs of the country. The science, the wisdom, the eloquence, which you teach, may carry

peace and safety from the palace to the cottage, and delight the world with the song of angels. We will not believe it possible for you to neglect one lesson, which may animate your pupils with the love of peace. If they make the attempt, is not their victory certain; will they not be the saviours of their country; must not their power of persuasion, in the court and senate, deliver the world from the havoc and carnage of war?

My brethren in the ministry have prevented my urging, or recommending the work of peace to them. Your repeated votes, your *unanimous* votes have proclaimed the benevolent sentiments of your hearts, and given a solemn pledge of your attachment to your Saviour, as the Prince of peace. Still may I not ask myself and you, whether we have done *all* in our power, to promote this precious cause? Have we thoroughly instructed and convinced our *own* people? Our nobles are from ourselves, and our governour proceeds from the midst of us. Our people direct the affairs of the Commonwealth. This Commonwealth has a powerful influence in the councils of the nation. If our general government were to say to the troubled sea of war, "Peace; be still," might not the effect surpass all calculation?

Let us not *rest*, till our people have adopted the heavenly doctrine of peace on earth. Let us not imagine our duty done, while any thing remains, which can possibly be done. Though the fires of war be again lighted up in Christendom, your faith is unshaken. The Prince of peace will not forget his own

name, nor blast the hopes, which rest on the promises of his word.

Had I any mode of access to the kings of the earth, forgetting my humble capacity, I would beseech them to have mercy on the family of man, and stop the effusion of human blood. I would say, Sires, though you are as gods, you must die like men. The wanton destruction of life is murder; the blood of armies may be required at your hands; grasping at more, you may lose what you have. Remember Bajazet, a captive, exhibited as a show, in an iron cage. Remember Charles, a prisoner, and executed before his own palace. Behold Napoleon, chained to a rock in the ocean. These were the warriours, who made the world tremble.

Yes, my beloved hearers, the work is begun; the work is advancing. Peace Societies are established in Europe and America. Mankind are opening their eyes. The sun of righteousness and peace is rising. The black night of war is passing away. The fountain of peace is breaking forth to refresh the world. Does not the sublime subject command *all* the affections of your hearts; all the efforts of your power? If ye hold your peace, will not the stones cry out? Will not the temples, profaned; the fields, red with blood; the beasts and cattle, destroyed; the *lost spirits of a thousand battles*, carry in their charge, before the throne of the great Eternal.

Does ONE man of the human family resist the doctrine of peace? Is ONE man grieved, hurt, or displeased? I only ask, and I do affectionately ask such a man,

—are not the unavoidable sufferings of mankind, numerous and terrible enough? Can you wish the life of mortals, to be shorter, or death more certain, or more dreadful?

Do not consumption, and poverty, and pestilence, and fevers, render the days of man sufficiently uncertain and miserable? Why, then, will you wantonly add all the undescribable horrours of war, to the long catalogue of human woes?

At home, on a bed of down, surrounded by dearest friends, *do* you wish the agonies of death more terrible?

Go near the bed of a dying parent, or a dying child; behold the agonies of their last hours. Are not their anguish and misery enough for them to endure, or for you to witness?

Would you wish they were far off on the ocean, to meet a violent death, without a friend to soothe the last moment; without the consoling offices of religion? Would you tear them from their pillows, and send them to expire on the field of battle?

Do you, indeed, wish to multiply the sufferings of life, and aggravate the horrours of dissolution? *Do* you wish the tears of the widow to flow with keener anguish? *Do* you wish the shriek of the orphan more dismal? *Do* you wish the king of terrours, a wider range, a more rapid march, a more frightful appearance? *Do* you wish more domestic sorrows, more public calamities, more sighs and groans to load the air, more tears to water the world?

If not; then implore and beseech the God of peace, to stop the fury of war; enrol your name among the friends of peace, and join in the song of angels; "Glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace, and good will towards men." *Amen.*

SERMON II.

JUDE 6th verse.

Unto the judgment of the great day.

2 PETER iii, 7.

But the heavens and the earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment.

THE ruins of a garden, the fading of a flower, the falling of a leaf, are ungrateful to the sight. The wreck of a ship, a house on fire, a sickly child, a dying parent, the mouldering bones of a tomb, awaken our pity, and diffuse a gloom over our minds. A tribunal of justice, the venerable judges, the celebrated advocates, the gazing multitude, the opening jail, the trembling prisoners, the able pleadings and the solemn verdict, is a scene to move and awe the heart of man. How much more affecting is the day of judgment, or the dissolution of all things; when the charms of nature must be defaced, and nature herself expire. Not only the flowers of spring, and the richer fruits of autumn, but palaces and cities vanish; the sun and stars dissolve; darkness and desolation follow.

The subject is forbidding to a gay world; but not therefore to be neglected. The *first* Christians looked forward to the last day with hope and transport, as to a glorious jubilee. Times are changed; still we should not divest ourselves of discretion and reason. Wise men foresee and prepare for evils, which are unavoidable, or only probable. They bring home to their minds the sufferings of their fellow creatures, and build hospitals. The conflagration of a city is a dreadful event; yet the citizens, instead of pushing the danger from their thoughts, form themselves into societies, and furnish themselves with engines to extinguish the flames. Though the expectation of *death* be terrible, men sometimes write their own wills, appoint their successors, direct where their bodies shall be buried, or build their own tombs.

A familiar contemplation of the great day may be equally wise, and a preparation for it more useful, than any of those deeds of wisdom and discretion.

The general *expectation* of such a day by all ages and nations, is evidence of its reality. A day of judgment is an article of almost every creed in the world. In this all parties of Christians unite. In this Pagans, and Jews agree. This doctrine is taught, not only in the churches of Jesus Christ, but in the mosques of Mahomet, and in the temples of the heathen gods. The Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, the Druids of Europe, taught the doctrine of a future judgment. The colleges of Egypt and Chaldea gave their testimony to support the solemn fact. In all the pomp of song, the bards of other times described the terrours of Minos, and the other judges of

the invisible world. Though tradition and allegory had obscured its splendours, the beams of truth burst the mantling clouds of errour and displayed the day of judgment as a tremendous scene.

What has commanded so general assent has high claim to our belief.

The frequent judgments, which overwhelm the wicked in this life, are presumptive arguments in favour of a *general* judgment. The miseries of Cain, of Achan, and Judas, were the day of judgment in miniature. Belshazzar and Voltaire, Herod and Robespierre, dying in torment, were witnesses of a judgment to come. If God thus visibly punish *some* sinners, it is highly probable that he will judge *all* sinners. But all are not judged in *this* life. These strongly argue for a day of general retribution.

Listen to that designing wretch, in the guise of friendship, prating of fidelity, of honour and truth, yet secretly practising every species of enmity against his greatest benefactor.

See yonder plausible hypocrite; a splendid Bible graces his parlour; he pleads for the clergy and the Sabbath, for public worship, and the Christian religion. He would be *thought* as temperate as Daniel, as pure as Joseph, as penitent as David, and as orthodox as Paul. He gains his point; his good name is as precious ointment: yet in his heart he despises the Christian religion; he detests the gospel ministry; and among his companions he ridicules the church, and scoffs at the doctrines of the cross. Is there not a day of judgment?

God judges some persons in *this* world to teach mankind that he will by no means clear the guilty. He suffers many others to pass with impunity, to prove that the great day of his wrath is coming. The present punishment of sinners, and their prosperity, both prove the same truth—the judgment of God.

With this day of trial, Scripture connects the universal *conflagration*. Do any circumstances render such a catastrophe probable?

The materials, in part, are already visibly prepared for a general conflagration. Numerous facts now show how possible and *probable* is such an event. Vast magazines of coal, in different countries, are found, buried in the bowels of the earth. Hills and plains in our own country conceal their immense stores of fuel, which may aid the fires of the great day. Miry grounds, in large portions of the globe, abound with a combustible substance, which being once kindled, the world will burn as an oven. The adamantine rocks are stored with latent sparks; may not these consume the dry land? Marshes and ponds often emit a fiery vapour; water absorbs an inflammable air; is capable of combustion, and may enrage the burning of the last day.

So visible were the means or so authentic the tradition of the event, that the ancient heathen believed in a general conflagration. Pliny the elder, supposed there was such a tendency in nature to this crisis, that he wondered it had not taken place. The Stoic philosophers, who had much important truth in their system: the Platonists, distinguished for the sublimity

of their philosophy ; the Epicureans and Pythagoreans, all expected a general conflagration. They probably learned the doctrine from the Chaldeans ; the Chaldeans received it from the Jews. Ancient heathen oracles, and poets, and historians, warn the world of the same terrible event ; as the Sybils, Sophocles, Hystaspes, and Lucan ; Strabo, Plutarch and others. Seneca says, " The stars shall run upon each other, and every thing being on flame, that which now shines regularly, shall then burn in one fire." Lucan says,

> " So when this frame of nature is dissolved,
> And the last hours in future times approach,
> All to its ancient chaos shall return.
> The stars shall fall ; the moon attack the sun,
> Driving her chariot through the burning sky."

The Sybils declared,—

> " For certainly the day will come, will come
> When the bright sky shall from his treasure send
> A liquid fire, whose all-devouring flames,
> By laws unbounded, shall destroy the earth.
> All shall vanish ; the waters of the deep shall turn
> To smoke; the earth shall cease to nourish trees;
> The air shall burn."

Ovid says " It was by fate decreed, that sea, and earth, and heaven should *burn*, and this vast frame of nature fail."

The brahmins of Siam and the savages of the Canary islands, expected the world would be destroyed by fire. This is one of the most *ancient* traditions. The Jewish historian relates that *Adam* foretold that the world should be destroyed by fire. The philosophers of Greece, expected the final dissolution of the

world by fire. "The world," say they, "is to be destroyed by a general conflagration."

Though the operations of nature in the centre of the earth must be very much more unknown to the inhabitants of the surface; yet circumstances render it probable, that matter is not cold and inactive in the fathomless abyss of the world. Earthquakes and volcanoes, vaguely reveal the secrets of the earth. "The enormous mass, which constitutes the mountains of Arabia," says a late voyager,* "rests upon no solid basis. An internal conflagration hath formed immense caverns under their foundations, which, passing under the Red Sea, communicate with Africa. Hence Maha and Zeila, two towns on the opposite shores of the Red Sea, feel the shock of an earthquake *precisely* at the same moment; which proves that they stand on one of those volcanic caverns, which passes under the bed of the sea." The island of Sicily is mostly covered with the eruptions of Ætna. This mountain, one hundred eighty three miles in circuit, and more than two in height, is supposed by philosophers to have vomited forth more than twenty times its own magnitude. The amazing furnace there burning below may be forty miles in depth, and nearly two hundred in circumference.

An English philosopher,† in his account of Vesuvius, says "There is every reason to believe with Seneca, that the seat of the fire, which causes the eruptions of volcanoes, lies deep in the bowels of the earth." The blazing hills are scattered among the

* Grandpre. † Sir W. Hamilton.

islands of the sea, and over both continents of the world. Geographers have given us information of about one hundred burning mountains.

Were it prophesied that a certain temple or palace should be consumed by fire; should we afterwards see flames, bursting from its hundred windows, could we for a moment doubt the truth of the prophecy?

The fires then, probably designed to spread a universal conflagration, are already kindled. They give sublimity and grandeur to the day, and double horrours to the night.

Several of these fires are burning in the southern part of Europe. In the north, Hecla, in Iceland, has thrown her blazing artillery one hundred and eighty miles. What a splendid arch of fire did this form! The fiery explosion, like a storm of comets, filled the country with amazement and terrour. In 1693 and also in 1766, her fires spread devastation and ruin over a country fifty miles in circuit. The burning lava has since formed a tract of devastation for hundreds of miles from the summit.

As our hardy seamen sail the great Pacific, and direct their course to the frozen regions of the north, along the western side of our continent, amid lofty mountains, they see volcanoes disgorge their fires, warning them of their approach to land.

More astonishing proofs than these, if more can be, of a general conflagration, press on our attention. Ancient and modern times have seen the internal fires of the world, raising islands from the sea, loaded with rocks and hills. How deep, how vast, how terrible must be those fires!

Are not here *visible* witnesses that the world *may* be burned in the day of the Lord? Every burning hill may be considered a lamp to show the divinity of revelation. But leaving presumptive arguments, we proceed to demonstration, resting the doctrine on the word of God.

The short epistle of the text furnishes much evidence. "The Lord saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards *destroyed* them who believed not. And the angels who kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, giving themselves over to fornication, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." By this we are taught, that as Sodom, and the old world, and the fallen angels, are reserved for trial at the great day; so are *all* sinners.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, though his writings are now lost, excepting one fragment, prophesied of the great day, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all."

In the book of Job, which is, probably, as ancient as any extant, the doctrine of a judgment is revealed; "Wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment."

David foretels the day of judgment, "For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness."

From the pages of Solomon, clearer light shines, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with

every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The son of Joseph taught the same doctrine. "Be ye also ready, for the Son of Man cometh in such an hour as ye think not."

St. John says he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. St. Peter declares that the heavens and the earth are reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment.

Having proved the *certainty* of a future day of judgment, we proceed to illustrate its *greatness*.

Any day may be called great in which great or important events take place. The day was great when the foundations of the world were fastened; when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. The day was great when the fountains of the mighty deep were broken up; when a *world* sunk in the deluge, and the church of God floated on a sea without a shore. The day was great which destroyed Sodom and the surrounding cities. The day was great which saw the Lord of glory bleed on a cross, enter the grave, chain the king of terrours, and overturn the empire of death. The day of judgment will be greater than all these combined.

1. The day of judgment will borrow greatness from its coming *unexpectedly*.

God generally bears with sinners till they have, in a great degree, worn off their convictions; till they justify themselves; till they are unconcerned respecting the judgments of his anger. When they seem to think God has forgotten their sins; when they put far

off the evil day ; when they dare to sin with a bolder hand ; then sudden destruction cometh.

The old world were deaf to the preaching of Noah. They probably ridiculed his sermons, and his horrible doctrine of a universal deluge, till it suddenly came and swept them away.

Sodom and the cities of the plain gaily ate and drank, and bought and sold, and planted and builded, and insulted Lot, till the day he left the city. While they were rioting and making themselves merry with his serious threatenings, fire blazed from heaven and destroyed them. So the Son of Man will come *unexpectedly*. Of that day and hour knoweth no man ; no, not the angels in heaven.

This dread hour may burst on the world in the midst of their business and pleasure. The children are sporting in the parlour or street ; the crowded schools are cheerful ; mothers are preparing for the return of their little ones ; the fathers are in the shop or field ; the grass is falling before the mower's scythe, and the song of the reapers is heard. In the dwelling of the prosperous is the voice of gladness and song ; mirth and riot echo from the board of luxury, and the chamber of amusement. Suddenly the trumpet sounds ; the Judge appears ; every face is pale, and every heart is terrour. Like Belshazzar they instantly pass from jolity and frolic to anguish and everlasting despair.

The great day is called the day of the Lord ; hence some have supposed, that on the Lord's day, while the children of God are worshipping in his house of prayer; while they are listening to the gospel with

holy affections; are ravished with the sweetness of divine truth, and the prospect of future glory; in a moment they shall be changed, and ascend to meet the Lord in the air.

The natural day contains an artificial day and night, or twenty-four hours. In scripture this period is often called a *day*. We know not, but, to gain new horrours, the dreadful day of judgment may at midnight burst upon mankind. When the world is wrapt in darkness, and creation is silent as the house of death; when the children of men are retired to rest and buried in sleep, dreaming over the criminal pleasures of the evening past, or contriving new scenes of guilt; then may an earthquake, lightnings and thunders, rouse the guilty world from their last slumbers. Amazed, they start; they wake to sleep no more. They see the Judge descending; the dead rising; they cry for shelter from the wrath of the Lamb. He cometh as a thief at night. The uncertainty of the time increases the terrour of his coming.

2. The resurrection of the dead, and the immense assembly collected will give greatness and magnificence to the day of judgment.

Those who are alive at the coming of the Lord, in a moment will be *changed*. They will experience an inconceivable transformation; corruption will put on incorruption; their mortal bodies will instantly become immortal.

Then will the Judge send his angels and gather in his elect from the four winds; from the uttermost parts of the earth. Then shall the tombs and graves, the store-houses of death, the repositories of human

dust, give up the precious remains of our parents and children, our lovers and friends; not a bone, not a particle of their dust shall be forgotten; bone shall come to his bone; sinews and flesh shall clothe the righteous in immortal beauty. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which *all* that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth. The traveller who fell in the desert, shall now awake, and be known by his friends. The prisoner, who died among his enemies, shall now rise and meet his kindred. The mouldering bones, buried by the hand of murder, shall come forward, and unfold a story of blood.

Families shall then rise. Parents and children come forth from their dark slumbers. Roused by the voice of God, WE shall awake; we shall arise; *we of this assembly*, shall burst from our graves and ascend to judgment. Oh, may we then welcome each other to light, to life and joy; unitedly may we ascend to hear our sentence, and enter into our rest.

Grave-yards move with life; a hundred generations come forth together; the lonely grave and the marble tomb give up their inhabitants. In the field of battle, where armies fought and bled, those armies rise again. Maimed soldiers receive their scattered limbs from distant countries. Nelson, the Christian hero, rising among kings and nobles, receives that vigorous arm, torn away in the fury of battle. From Europe, the head of Pompey again unites with the body, rising from the dust of Africa.

On the plains of Abram, and the borders of Champlain; on the hills of Saratoga and Charlestown, York

and Monmouth, the fallen ranks again appear. The legions of Cæsar, and the millions of Xerxes; Abram and his seed, as the stars of heaven for multitude, are all present. The sea, boundless grave-yard, paved with the skulls of neighbours and friends, gives up her dead; the bones of those wrecked in storms, or slain in battle, appear clothed with immortality. The old world, drowned in the flood are here. Adam beholds his innumerable posterity; the whole earth has resigned her scattered myriads; a vast throng, a great day.

All the inhabitants of *heaven* will be present. At the dawning of the morning, the Lord God himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Not the trumpet of jubilee, nor the blast of war; but the trump of the *archangel*, which instantly rouses the dead. More terrible the sound than when it shook the foundations of Sinai. In all the glory of the Godhead, Jesus appears in front of the procession. He confines not his presence to the manger of Bethlehem, the temple of Jerusalem, the plains of Jordan, or the land of Judea. He publicly shows himself to the universe. "Behold he comes with clouds, and *every eye* shall see him."

With all the terrours of a Judge, with all the majesty of God, he comes to judge the world. How unlike the child flying into Egypt; how unlike the poor wanderer, sleeping on the mountains of Israel; how unlike the prisoner, insulted and scourged in the courts of Jerusalem; how unlike the man covered with blood in the garden, and dying on Calvary! Is

this the *man* we saw expire on the cross? *Has* he been laid in a grave and covered with a rock?

Abram, Isaac and Jacob have left their seats of glory. David and Solomon, Enoch and Elijah, and all the holy prophets, join the heavenly train. All the righteous of the twelve tribes of Israel, with the apostles, martyrs, and Christians of every age, an innumerable company, which no man can number, descend with the Son of man.

All the inhabitants leave the holy city, their splendid thrones, their songs of praise, to attend the solemnities of the last day. The Lord Jesus comes in glory, and all the holy angels with him. Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand are round about him. As he passes, the heavens are hung with sackcloth; the sun hides his face; the moon is blood; earth trembles, and hell is moved. In the region of the air they pause. Thrones of judgment are prepared. Heaven and earth are present.

What renders the scene more awful, all hell will now appear. "The angels, who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, God has reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of this great day. They are now prisoners confined for trial on this great day. Satan, and all rebellious angels, and all sinners, will be dragged in chains to the bar of judgment.

For *once* the everlasting gates of hell will be unbarred. The doleful mansions of infernal darkness and despair will be left without one inhabitant. Judas and the rich man, Ananias and Sapphira, and all impeni-

tent sinners, appear before their Almighty Judge. From regions of solid darkness, from the cries and wailings of infinite despair; from the gnawing worm, and the fiery lake, they come forth, they see the light; they see their own guilt; they see the justice of God; they hear their sentence, and begin their hell. How great the day! Heaven, earth, and hell, stand collected!

3. The display of characters increases the greatness of the last day.

All hearts will be revealed. Artificial appearances are at an end; affected goodness vanishes; apparent and real are the same. He whose eyes are a flame of fire, searches every heart, publishes every life.

The books are opened; the volumes of nature and revelation. Every person will be judged by the law he has enjoyed. Plato, and Socrates, and Pagans of every age and country, will be judged by the law of nature. They will be condemned only as they have violated natural reason and conscience.

Abram and Moses, Jews and Christians, will be judged by the law of Revelation. They will be considered guilty, as far as they have broken these laws.

The volumes of omniscience and conscience are opened. The power of memory will, probably, be so invigorated, that every person will remember the actions of his whole life, as distinctly as you now recollect the actions of this morning. God will bring to view every work done in the body. Every person shall give an account for himself to God. Better had it been for you, Oh ye profane swearers, had ye been born without the power of speech. Better had it been for you, intemperate men, had you been confined to the

bed of sickness, loathing the honey-comb. Good had it been for Sabbath breakers, had ye been born among the savages of the forest. Ye are lost; in debt ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay.

That characters may appear just as they are, secret sins will be revealed. As the hand, writing on the wall, shook the sturdy frame of Belshazzar with horrour; so will the wicked tremble at the opened books. Their guilt is not written in a strange language or in unknown characters. They need not the wise men of Babylon to decypher the meaning of any charge. They will be speechless with guilt, shame, and despair, when fair appearances are torn away, and every eye shall see their coldness and selfishness, their art and hypocrisy in the most sacred duties of religion. They will be speechless, as they see the page of their secret hatred and enmity, their poisonous flatteries and base compliances, practised against their generous benefactors. They will be speechless, as they see the page of their silent contempt, their proud disdain, and their cruel neglect of those below them in society. They will be speechless as they see the page of their wanton thoughts, their impure desires, their lawless passions, their seducing arts, by which they destroyed the hopes of families, and plunged immortal souls into everlasting misery. Whose heart and life will bear the trial? Whose spirit does not die within him, in view of the last tribunal? What heart will be glad? Whose humility and faith will support him, when the darkness of night shall vanish, the curtains be drawn, and he stand forth to learn his guilt, and hear his sentence? Designs and motives will be known. Naked

hearts appear in all the deformities of spiritual death. It will be known why some do not support the cause of God, nor do good to their fellow-men; it will be known why some appear engaged for the glory of God and the felicity of man.

Sins of omission experience the justice of the law. It will be known, who neglected to mourn for sin, to believe in Jesus Christ, or to call upon God. In displaying the guilt of those condemned at this time, Jesus Christ mentions *only* sins of omission. "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." It does not appear that these ruined mortals had done any positive wrong. Like many people, who are considered decent, moral Christians, they had enjoyed their own comforts without injuring or offending others. They reproached themselves with no crime, they probably felt no remorse. They are damned for neglecting the stranger, the sick, and the poor.

The long controversy whether sinners are God's enemies is now to be decided. On examination it appears that *wicked works* are the natural expressions of enmity to God; that murmurs against Providence arise from hatred of God; that *opposing* the doctrines of the gospel, is actually fighting against God; that *contempt* of the Christian ministry, is contempt of Jesus Christ; that *all selfishness* is warfare against the kingdom of heaven. So are human characters revealed, before the universe.

In this solemn scene, God also unfolds his own character. God appears in all his glory; his perfections shine with infinite lustre. His power is manifested in raising the dead, and calling all worlds before his bar. His patience is displayed in his bearing so long with sinners. His mercy and grace are evident in his choosing and calling so many to eternal life. Justice shines with overwhelmed splendour in his recording all the wickedness of the wicked, and in punishing them with everlasting destruction. The truth of God commands the admiration of the universe. He had said, he would raise the dead; he has raised the dead. He had said, he would gather all nations before his presence; he has gathered all nations before him. He had said, he would bring every work into judgment; he has brought every work into judgment. He had said, the wrath of man should praise him; the wrath of man does praise him. God is known on the tribunal of judgment.

4. The separation of the righteous from the wicked, will render the day of judgment a *great* day. The Judge will separate them as a shepherd doth his sheep from the goats; the righteous on the right hand, the wicked on the left. Serious and terrible is the moment. Cain and Balaam, Felix and Belshazzar, where are they? Pilate is at the bar, and the Babe of Bethlehem is on the throne. On the right hand behold the happy throng. There is Abel, and Noah, and Abram, with the patriarchs and prophets. There is the beloved John, and the valiant apostle to the Gentiles, with the whole family of Christ, the martyrs and saints of every age and country.

Have not some of you the *assurance* of *hope*, that you will be found in this holy company? Do we not there behold a part of this assembly? And are not *all* of you on the right hand! Where, *where!* is the poor, miserable, lost soul, to be found on the left hand? In which seat is he? Is he our friend, our brother? Have pity on him; have pity on him;—but have you not a serious concern for *yourselves?* On the right, are the countless millions of the millennium. The precious and the vile never will unite again. Families, churches, and congregations are separated for the last time. In some instances parents take a last view of their children. David, no more, will see his Absalom. Children for the last time will see their parents. Good Josiah resigns his wicked father Amon, to the dreadful justice of God. Lovers and friends, whom death could not separate, are now forever and forever separated. Fathers, can ye resign your darling boys to the unchangeable sentence of their Judge? Mothers, can ye leave your daughters on the left hand of your Saviour? What is the anguish of closing the eyes of a child or a parent compared with this; what the anguish of leaning over the grave of an only son. How great the day, which separates the righteous from the wicked; when we hear the final adieu of neighbours and friends; the last farewell of parents and children.

5. The probable *length* of the day of judgment, will render it *great* and solemn.

How much time the process of this day will require, no created being can ascertain. If we examine the business to be accomplished, we shall probably be

convinced that more than one natural day will be required. The great design of the solemnity is not to inform Deity, but to convince and satisfy creatures. These receive truth gradually, and often slowly. Every one must give an account of his open sins, of his secret sins, of his actions, his passions, his thoughts, of his childhood, his youth, and his riper years. We presume not to fix the duration of this day; but sure we are, it will continue till all the ungodly are convinced of all their ungodly deeds. The term *day* is used in Scripture; but a thousand years with the Lord are as one day. Possibly, therefore, the day of judgment may continue a thousand years; a thousand years solemnly examining the lives and hearts of men. Great and awful period!

6. The joys of the righteous, and the terrours of the wicked, led before their Judge, increases the *greatness* of the day.

Here words fail, nor can imagination realize the truth. Eloquence might not dare attempt a description. Who can describe what is inconceivably terrible. Those who had passed through life without terrour of conscience, without a sense of danger, the hope of pleasure in their hearts, and the voice of gladness in their lips, now awake to guilt, dismay, and terrour. Friendly advice, serious reproofs, awakening sermons, holy sabbaths, years of salvation, all disregarded; all lost, for ever lost, now rush on the mind. The convictions they quenched; the resolutions they violated; the calls of Providence they rejected; the solemn vows they broke, wring their hearts, and overwhelm their spirits. Their self-deception, their oppo-

sition to good men; their hatred of truth, their wilful errours, fill them with consternation. The kindling wrath of their Judge; the malignant spirits, devils and fallen angels, who are to be their companions; the lake of fire, already burning, distract and amaze their souls. They cry, "Oh that we had known the things of our peace; Oh that we had not hated instruction and despised reproof. Had we been wise; had we listened to parents and ministers, we had not come to this place of torment." On the other hand are seen the smiles of peace and cheerfulness, of hope and joy. Were a number of prisoners, tried for their lives, justified by an earthly court, would not the relief of their anxiety, the gladness and the raptures of their minds, surpass description? What is this compared with pardon, with justification at the bar of God? They recollect their wanderings, their sins, their crimes; of their spiritual dangers, their temptations, and their terrours of conscience, they have a lively remembrance. Their sense of unworthiness and crimson guilt, sinks deep in their hearts. But they find themselves surrounded with chosen vessels of honour. Their Judge is reconciled; he is "their brother;" he has bled and died for them. Their past sufferings are foils to set off their present prospects; their losses, their trials, and tears, enhance their present felicity. Raised above the darkness, the distress, and dangers of this life, they are waiting for glory and immortality. As Moses saw from Pisgah's top the land of promise, and the goodly mountain of Lebanon, so they see in heaven, vacant seats and golden thrones, waiting their arrival. With the voice of love and grace, the Judge

addresses them, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, before the foundation of the world."

Then, assuming all the terrours of an angry Judge, to those on the left, he says, "*depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.*" They sink; they fall; hatred, and envy, and anger, raging in every breast. Almighty wrath hurls them down, down to burning lakes, to the blackness of darkness; to the prisons of everlasting despair. Damnation opens all its horrours. They lie down in everlasting burnings; but not a heart of love, not a hand of kindness or pity, is found in all the miserable regions of lost souls.

What do we say? Does not one pray, who never prayed before? "Have mercy on me, and send, Oh send, one drop of water, to cool my parched tongue, tormented in this flame. Send Lazarus, wrapt in a blaze of glory, to warn my brethren, that they come not to this place of torment." Prayers in hell, will never be answered; prayers, not addressed to God in the name of Christ, will never be answered. The poor stubborn, unbending soul is denied a drop of water, or a message to his five brethren.

The righteous, being invited by Jesus Christ, have ascended to glory, to mansions prepared for them before the foundations of the world. Jesus and his redeemed ones, robed in spotless purity, are entering the pearly gates of the heavenly city. There they rest from their labours; there the wicked cease from troubling; there God shall wipe tears from every eye; there shall be no more death. The splendours of

glory kindle immortal raptures in every breast; they join in the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord, God, Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Gabriel, and the angelic hosts, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, with a loud voice, swell the chorus of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen." In his creatures' felicity, God himself is blest.

But, finally, our world like a falling temple, or a sinking ship, having been forsaken during the long day of judgment, is now to be burned! This closes the great day. The world, which had for thousands of years been polluted with sin; the hospital of the human race; the province of death, being itself one continued burying-ground, this world is now to perish.

At this awful crisis as the judgment closes, the lightnings blaze, the thunders roar, the air is flame. The combustible substances on the surface of the earth begin the conflagration. The fields are consumed; the forests vanish; villages, and towns, and cities, are lost in a flood of fire. One boundless blaze enwraps the world. A hundred burning mountains burn, and heaven's last thunders shake the world. The meadows undermine the hills; they bow, and fall, and vanish, as fuel in a furnace. The snowy top

of Lebanon sinks in the devouring fire. The venerable Ararat, which once saved the church of God on its towering summit, is now enveloped in the common ruin. Carmel and Sinai, Zion and Calvary, vanish as leaves of the forest, and are seen no more. The volcanoes of the South disgorge their seas of fire; they advance; they combine with those in the North; they raise a rampart of flame from the southern ocean to the frozen pole. The branching hills extend their fires in every direction. Nature's final hour is come. The Andes, the Alps, and Appenines, send their blazing columns to heaven. The heavens are departing as a scroll; the elements are melting with fervent heat; a comet's raging fires melt the rocks, and dissolve the world. The heavens are on *fire;* they are passing away with a great noise. The heavens and the earth, which now are, by the same word of God, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Amazing idea of the sinner's punishment; the place a burning world, a system on fire. The stars are fallen; the earth, driven from her orbit, hurries to the sun; the blazing planets rush to this common centre, and are lost for ever. Boundless ruin spreads her terrours; all is one immense globe of fire.

Where are the splendid cities of the world, and their numerous inhabitants? Where are their veteran armies, their daring commanders, their impregnable towers, and their thundering artillery? Where are their solemn temples, their holy ministers, and their adoring churches? Where are their glittering palaces, and their royal masters? All, all are vanished as flakes of

snow, in the blaze of summer; not a single atom behind. Such is the close of time; such the close of the great day.

Many reflections are suggested by the subject; but our time is exhausted. We only ask in one word, what improvement will you make of the subject; what resolutions will you form; into what promises, what covenant engagements, will you now enter before God? Should a heavenly spirit descend full of tenderness and love; should he now address you, in a mortal voice, what would be his advice? Would he not say, dying mortals, pastor and people, are ye *prepared* for the day of judgment? Are ye ready to see the heavens open and the Judge appear? Behold his glory. Descending in awful majesty, he sweeps suns and stars aside, the Almighty Judge! If ye dread the fury of his anger, if ye value your immortal souls, trample not in his atoning blood; grieve not his holy spirit; despise not his precious gospel, lest this bleeding lamb, become the lion of Judah; lest he who knocks at your doors, his head wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, soon swear in his wrath, "you shall never enter into my rest." Hath the last solemn scene awakened every heart, and opened every eye? Where is the heart, which dares cry peace; where is the eye, which dares sleep again, till his peace is made with God? Dare you challenge Almighty wrath; dare you brave the terrours of the burning lake?

Are the pleasures of *sense* a balance for the miseries of *eternity?* Are the raptures of a moment a balance for everlasting burnings? Animated with sinful pleas-

ures *dare* you meet the king of terrours; dare you welcome the day of judgment; dare you *wish* for immortal existence? Would you live without peace of mind; would you die without hope; would you in the day of judgment cry to rocks and mountains for relief; would you through a hopeless eternity, curse your God and king, begging in vain for a drop of water? If not, then like Zaccheus, welcome the Lord of life, to your house and your heart; like the beloved John, lean on the Saviour's breast; like Jacob, wrestle till you obtain the blessing; like Paul, be *ready* to depart. Be ye also ready; for the Son of man cometh in such an hour as ye think not. If the righteous scarcely are saved; where, *where* will the ungodly and sinners appear? Soon a universal cry will rend the caverns of death. "The great day of his wrath is come, and who is able to stand?" The Judge proclaims "Behold I come quickly." Let every heart reply, "Come Lord Jesus; come quickly." *Amen.*

SERMON III.

2 CORINTHIANS iv, 4.

The glorious Gospel of Christ.

THE Gospel is that scheme of mercy which is revealed in the word of God. God having condescended to become an Author, we discover a work like himself, sublime and glorious. The Gospel alleviates the heaviest woes of man, and is a source of consolation in his most deplorable necessities. Though the heathen, in his most uncultured state, perceives himself to be vastly superiour to the other creatures around him ; still in his most refined elevation, he is oppressed with weakness, terrified with dangers, perplexed with doubts, tormented with sufferings, for which he discovers neither cause nor remedy. His neighbours die ; his parents die ; his children die ; he is dying himself. He exclaims, "Where have my friends gone ? What is their state ? Shall we ever meet again? Why all this misery?" To his mind is not the scene a chaos of goodness and wrath ? He reflects : he argues ; he is confounded ; he despairs. That cheering light, which shall *partially* dispel his darkness, is like the opening

of the prison to them who are bound. That friendly voice which shall answer *some* of his anxious inquiries, is glorious like the first song of heaven to the departed saint. Such a light shines, such a voice is heard from the pages of the Gospel.

To mention a few instances in which the Gospel is glorious, is the present design.

I. The Gospel is glorious in revealing truths, most important, but which had been unknown, or not clearly discovered, by the heathen world.

This fact proves the *necessity* of revelation; and from this we may infer, that God would give a revelation. While destitute of this divine instruction, *have* mankind ever conceived just ideas of the Divine Being? Which is the nation, learned or unlearned; who is the profound sage, what is his name, who has entertained consistent ideas of the holiness, the justice, or the *providence* of God? Their gods have been gods of the hills and of the vallies, gods of the sea and of the dry land. Their gods were unrighteous; they were the dupes of intrigue; they were polluted with crimes. I do not however say, that no pagans have ever had *any* just or sublime conceptions of the Deity. By the force of genius, or the borrowed rays of distant revelation, most sublime thoughts have been elicited; but these are as rare and as useless, compared with the permanent light of the Christian world, as the lucid flashes of the electric cloud, compared with the splendours of the shining sun.

No pagan nation has adopted rational views of *immortality*. Though they have generally yielded

a vague credence to the doctrine, their proofs have been inconclusive and without authority, producing little interest with the mass of the people, and affording the learned rather a theme of amusing speculation, than a reason for serious practice. Yes: concerning this most *sublime* doctrine, which is essential to comfort, to hope, to morality, even the luminaries of the pagan world, their Tully, their Socrates, and their Plato, argued in a most unsatisfactory manner. He that is least in the kingdom of Christ is greater than they were. Speaking in the name of Socrates, Plato asserts the immortality of the soul; but his proof may be thought puerile. "That which is always in *motion*," saith he, "is immortal." This he applies to the soul. Tully reasons in the same manner. "That which is always moved is *eternal*." Plato believed, that human souls were emanations from the Deity, or *Soul* of the universe, at death restored to the fountain whence they came, and therefore immortal; but this would certainly *destroy* their immortality. A short time before his death, Socrates reasoned thus with his friends, "It is an ancient tradition, that our souls go hence to another world, whence they return to this; therefore they are immortal." Another argument of his was, "All things take their rise from *contraries;* watching produces sleep, and sleep watching; death arises from life, so must life from death. If living things did not rise from the dead, all things would finally be swallowed up in death; therefore, the immortality of the soul must be granted." Could such reasoning satisfy any mind? Is it strange, then, that Tully, while he often argues

in favour of the doctrine, seriously doubted of the soul's immortality? He says, "While I am reading, I assent; but when I lay aside my book, and begin to meditate by myself, concerning the immortality of souls, all my conviction slides away." From Plutarch we learn, that the opinion, just ascribed to Plato, was common among the Stoicks, and other sects of ancient philosophy, that human souls are portions of the Deity. A doctrine similar to this has been holden from time immemorial by the Brahmins of India, whose sacred books teach, that intellect is a portion of the great soul of the universe, breathed into all creatures, to animate them for a certain time; that after death it animates *other* bodies, or returns like a drop into that unbounded ocean from which it first arose. A sober fact it is, at the present moment, that the greater part of the human race believe in the doctrine of transmigration, or the transition of souls from one body to another. While we grant that the heathen have had some vague notions of immortality, still was there not a *necessity* of a revelation to rectify their errours on this point, that the doctrine might become a powerful argument for piety and morality, a source of sublime hope and consolation? It may, however, be remembered, that Tully relates, that the preceptor of Pythagoras was the first man, known to the learned world, who taught the doctrine of immortality. Socrates says, that most men believed that the soul was at death reduced to nothing.

The views of the heathen concerning their own moral characters were equally confused and wrong. Not having just ideas of the divine holiness, it was

not possible they should have adequate conceptions of human depravity. The malignity of wickedness results from its opposition to infinite goodness. The heathen are successful in the chase, victorious in war, or happy in their domestic circle. They look abroad; the blossoms of spring, the fruits of autumn, the genial sun, the sparkling stars, proclaim the goodness of the great Spirit. Remorse and self-reproach sting the conscience for their ingratitude and malevolence. But the scene changes; they are conquered; or famine and pestilence lay waste their villages; or the angry storm, the furious tornado, its peals of thunder and fatal lightning amaze and distract their souls. Where is now the goodness of the great Spirit? Will they not justify their evil deeds? How great would be the change in their views, should they hear that their first father revolted from God, that his children are born in his likeness, and are in a state of condemnation!

Of a Redeemer, in whom all the families of the earth shall be finally blessed, the heathen have never made any discovery. The word of God contains *all* our light and knowledge respecting a Mediator between God and man. This glory of the Gospel, this last hope of man, is entirely unknown to all the tribes of the world who have not read the word of God. Yet, as if pressed by the *necessity* of such a doctrine; as if *impelled* by an overwhelming sense of their imbecility, or directed by some perverted tradition of a Mediator, most pagan nations have substituted mediators between them and the eternal God. Heroes.

and sages, and ancestors, are addressed in their necessities, as mediators.

The doctrine of an adequate atonement for sin, is discovered nowhere but in the pages of revelation. There alone we learn that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" there alone we learn, that for those who have not done "*well*," "a sin offering lieth at the door." In the fulness of time, this sacrifice was manifested to the world; because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This was the language of every victim from the lamb of Abel to the Lamb of God on Mount Calvary. Jesus Christ was "made to be sin," i. e. a *sin-offering* for his people. "He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." "He made propitiation for the sins of the world." So congenial is this with the convictions of mankind, or so splendid was its first revelation, that in all nations, even where the original tradition had been lost, or perhaps had never been heard, sacrifices have always been offered. The most ancient nations in every quarter of the world offered *vicarious* sacrifices. The Egyptians, having cut off the head of their victim, and loaded it with execrations, prayed that, if any evil were hanging over the land, it might fall on that head. They then sold it to the Greeks, or threw it into the Nile. Among the Hindoos, also, they offer a sacrifice, resembling that of the scape-goat of the Jews. The blood of sacrifices has been sprinkled from Canaan to Mexico, from China to Europe. They believed that the more precious was the offering, the more acceptable it was to the gods. Hence the universality of human

sacrifices; hence the altars of Moloch have been red with the blood of innocence in every quarter of the earth. 'That *sincerity* will meet the same reward as *actual* services, where the power is wanting; that the mite of the widow is as acceptable as the sacrifices of opulence,' saith M. Neckar, 'is an idea in the Gospel absolutely new. In no system of paganism has purity of morals constituted any part of the design. The heathen religions have been, merely, an exhibition of rites and ceremonies.* The celebration of these was the whole business of their priests; on these celebrations were supposed to rest the glory of the nation. A perfect rule of life has never been discovered, but in the word of God. Here alone we are taught, that love to God and benevolence to man comprises our whole duty. Of course the heathen have been ignorant of several important duties. A reasonable mode of *worship* they have never discovered. This most pure, most elevated service, which brings the heart into nearest communion with its God, is often with them a scene of profligacy and crimes. From no part of the world could the first writers of revelation borrow any examples or instructions to establish a rational or decorous mode of worship. In no other country was one God alone the object of worship; in no other country was one national altar erected; in no other country was one precise ritual established for the whole nation.

Whether prayer be a *duty*, whether it produce any *advantage*, whether it be not an *intrusion* on rights divine, has never been ascertained by the wisdom of

* Dr. Clark.

the world.* What relief, then, is it to the man of sorrows, whose heart is torn by disappointment, crushed by adversity, or overwhelmed with guilt, to hear a voice from heaven, "Is any afflicted, let him pray;" "Ask, and ye shall receive."

Whether *repentance* is a duty, which will appease an offended God, can be learned only from his holy word. A confused *hope* of this has produced those acts of penance, those tortures and self-immolations, so common among heathen. But repentance makes no atonement; it redeems no claim, which had been lost; and it is only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that the penitent *is* pardoned. The pagan mourns; he weeps; his wound incurable, except by "the balm of Gilead, and the Physician there."

The enlightened Romans had no word in their language to express *humility*.† This proves they did not consider it a moral virtue. She was a stranger, her name unknown. The word in that language from which we derive humility, signifies lowness, poorness, meanness, baseness, inability, want of power, &c. The *precision* with which moral ideas are expressed among Christians, is a permanent monument of their refined and elevated morality. Of this the English word *murder* is a notable instance; such a word, expressing the killing of a man with malice, is not found in the language of the polished Romans.

The means of obtaining strength to perform these duties, are discovered only in the word of God. Though a Roman moralist once said, "No one was ever a great man without a divine inspiration;"‡ yet

* Dr. Priestley. † Buck. ‡ Cicero.

no consistent ideas of divine influences, or of the means of obtaining them, were ever conceived by the pagan world. They have never known, that every good emotion of the heart is from the Spirit of God; they have never known that our heavenly Father is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him, than earthly parents are to give good things to their children.

Of future rewards and punishments, the notions of the heathen have been too chimerical and childish to be mentioned in a Christian assembly. In the systems of pagan wisdom, the doctrine of the *resurrection* is no where found. For them the grave is shrouded in perpetual night. By the light of the Gospel alone, we see the tomb open, and the prisoner come forth. So absolutely unknown and *unheard* of was the doctrine, that the word was unintelligible, even to the learned Athenians. When Paul preached to them Jesus, and the *resurrection*, they thought that *resurrection* was the name of a new god; but the Author of the Gospel gave proof of the doctrine in his own person. Robed in light, angels descend; they roll the stone from the door of his tomb; he rises; he goes to Galilee, and for forty days converses with his friends. From mount Olivet he ascends, a cloud receives him; in triumph he enters the New Jerusalem, a sure pledge that all his disciples shall rise.

It may be said, the preacher is lost in the darkness of antiquity; that men *now* are not so ignorant. But was revelation necessary for the ancients? Where is the evidence, that the moderns are more sagacious? The moderns, who are destitute of revelation, are

just as stupid as the ancients. For the proof of this, I appeal to the present state of the pagan world. The aboriginals of this country, it is well known, entertain the most fanciful ideas of a future state. Their bows and arrows, their ornaments, are buried with them for their use in the land of spirits. The Tartars bury their richest dress and furniture with their dead. Customs like these are common in every quarter of the globe. Our savages fly from the spirits, which reside in their solitary islands, or on the tops of their mountains. They tremble at the god, who thunders in the cloud, roars in the volcano, or shrieks in the howlings of the storm. If you will pass to the islands of the Pacific, you will find their sacred places groaning with bones of their human sacrifices; you will see them barter away their gods, or banish them, or chastise them, when they do not seem to regard their wishes. In Africa, you will find idolatry more puerile, more dismal.

Is it said these are *savages?* Then I appeal to nations more enlightened, where the arts which humanize, where the sciences, which elevate the mind, have long prevailed. In China the people are covered with gross darkness, concerning the unity of God, and other essential truths. As arduous is the task to Christianize them, as the savages of the desert. Their libraries are numerous; their colleges are richly endowed; their learned men are greatly respected; but by all their wisdom, they do not know *God.* In no part of the world do the missionaries find delusions more absurd, prejudices more obstinate, or their work more hopeless. The most reputable religion of

China has no name for God; while that of the vulgar is burdened with festivals, ceremonies and idols.

In Japan idolatry has prevailed from time immemorial; nor will they now protect a stranger, unless he will trample on the cross of Jesus, to prove his detestation of Christianity.

If you sail to India, you may see sixty millions of people bowing to thirty millions of gods. You may see a system of morals which strike the mind with horrour; you may sea infants murdered by their parents; you may see their sick friends deserted to die alone; you may see the widows burning in the same fires with their husbands.

In Thibet, a *man* is worshipped as the eternal God. Their sovereign Lama, the high priest of their religion, is believed to be immaculate, immortal, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Their temples are thronged with gods, and the waters of the Ganges, are carried over the mountains, to wash away their sins.

At the present moment, such is the religious state of the world, where the word of God is not read; where the glorious Gospel is not preached. Will the advocates for natural religion plead that this is a degenerate age, and appeal to antiquity? We have just *seen* that all antiquity is against them. What was the religion of the Romans? what was their worship? who were their gods? Their religion countenanced pride and revenge; their worship often consisted in scenes of intemperance, lasciviousness, and human sacrifices.

What was the boasted wisdom of the Greeks? Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece, says

that the sun, and moon, and stars, are animated and divine. Pythagoras calls these luminaries *immortal gods.* With them the Roman orator agrees, and calls the sun the *supreme* god.

What was the learned religion of Egypt? At one time *they* considered the heavenly luminaries, as the *only* gods, the creators of all things; they acknowledged eight primary gods;* but afterwards, brutes, reptiles and vegetables were deified. The poisonous serpent, the deadly asp, the stupid ox, fishes and birds, were gods of Egypt! Lord, what is man, while destitute of the Gospel! Neither civilization, nor the arts, improve his religious knowledge.

II. The Gospel is glorious because of its powerful tendency to comfort, to sanctify, and to save the souls of men.

The Gospel is addressed to the spiritual necessities of all classes of men. Were the Gospel addressed only to the wants of the poor and afflicted, it would unavoidably provoke the contempt of the rich and happy. Were the Gospel accommodated only to the rich and great, it would irresistibly kindle the fires of envy and hatred. Happily the word of life is glad tidings of great joy to all people. No situation is so low, no circumstances are so terrible, as not to borrow some comfort from the Gospel of Jesus. No man is so elevated, so blest and happy, as not to be more blest and happy by the Gospel.

The man of business, wearied with his labours, disappointed in his plans, sick of his pursuits, turns

* Faber on the Cabiri, Bryant, &c.

to the Gospel, and finds rest to his spirit. The youth finds his desires moderated, the impetuosity of his passions restrained, his pursuits directed to noble objects, worthy his immortal destination. The aged, seeing his last sand falling and hearing the chariot-wheels of his Redeemer coming, exults in the consolations of the Gospel. See the devout astronomer. He directs his glass to the starry sky; he discovers new planets, and measures their distance; but soon his hand trembles; his instruments drop; the grandeur and sublimity of the prospect vanish; he leaves his unfinished calculations. Think him not wretched; though his science forsake him, he looks to the cross and the tomb of his Saviour; he sees him arise, "Then," saith he, "I rose; then glory and immortality were secured to me."

In sanctifying the heart, the gospel shines, with unrivalled lustre, over all the systems of men. These *propose* only to direct the sacred rites, or at most the opinions of their disciples; but the word of God changes the moral character of the heart, and reforms the actions of the life. The "truth" of the word "sanctifies" the devout reader. Devotedness to the different gods of heathenism, only leads the devotees to different altars, to different sacrifices, to different rites, and forms, and ceremonies. The man remains the same, the same child of nature, the same son of violence, his passions ungoverned, his conduct unrestrained. But the word of God inspires the heart with universal benevolence; its efficacy is wonderful; it wounds and it heals; it kills and it makes alive.

If the word of God be received in any country, the happy effects are wonderful. Idol temples are gradually deserted; gross vices become less common; wars are conducted with more humanity. In those countries where prisoners had been offered in sacrifice to their bloody gods, or eaten as a banquet of victory, or tortured and murdered from mere revenge, if the word of God be received among them, the ferocity of their passions is softened and suppressed, captivity becomes a less bitter cup; prisoners are only sold, or made slaves, or they are *exchanged.* In a country where the word of God is *generally* respected, prisoners of war are often released without a ransom, as our own miserable soldiers learn by daily experience. Without making the *request*, they are sent home to their country and friends. Acts of retaliation against the barbarism of infidel armies, seldom proceed further than the destruction of *public property.*

The Goths, who formerly carried war and desolation over Europe, were only partially acquainted with the word of God; yet a learned writer declares, that they exhibited more instances of genuine mercy, continence, and generosity, than can be furnished by the whole history of pagan Rome.*

The Romans, instead of sending their prisoners home, subjected their necks to be trampled on by their soldiers; and afterwards sold them at public auction. Frequently they burned them on the funeral piles of their aged warriours, sacrifices to the infernal gods. Well, therefore, might a late celebrated bishop of London† say of Christianity, "It has insensibly

* Dr. Ireland. † Dr. Porteus.

worked itself into the inmost frame and constitution of civil states. It has given a tinge to the complexion of their governments, to the temper and administration of their laws. It has restrained the spirit of the prince, and the madness of the people. It has softened the rigour of despotism, and tamed the insolence of conquest. It has, in some degree, taken away the edge of the sword, and thrown, even over the horrours of war, a veil of mercy. As one proof of this, among many others, consider only the shocking carnage made in the human species by the exposure of infants, and the gladiatorial shows, which sometimes costs Europe twenty or thirty thousand lives in a *month.*" "Here," continues the same author, "here the hard and impenitent heart has been softened, the impetuous passions restrained, the ferocious temper subdued, powerful prejudices conquered, ignorance dispelled, and the obstacles to real happiness removed. Here the Christian, looking round on the glories and blandishments of this world, has been enabled with a noble contempt to despise all. Here death itself, the king of terrours, has lost its sting, and the soul, with a holy magnanimity, has borne up in the agonies of a dying hour, and sweetly sung itself away to everlasting bliss." Another learned writer says, "Kings and peasants, conquerors and philosophers, the wise and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, have been brought to the foot of the cross; yea, millions have been enlightened, improved, reformed, and made happy by its influences."

Thus, my hearers, the word of God, when it comes with power, has an irresistible energy. It tears up

the roots of human depravity; it breaks up the fallow ground of the heart, and produces the flowers and fruits of paradise. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. The man is no longer "a rebel," "a viper," "a serpent." He is an heir of glory. "The law of the Lord is pure, converting the soul."

Behold Saul of Tarsus. Like a tyger of the forest, he breathes slaughter and death. He has prepared the prisons; the chains are forged; he is on the road to Damascus, to drag men, women and children to Jerusalem. At mid-day a light blazes around him; he falls; he hears a voice, "Saul, *Saul*, why persecutest thou *me?* What injury have I done thee?" "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" he cries. He is willing to do any thing, to be scourged or imprisoned, or to go about doing good, visiting the sick, and preaching the gospel to the poor.

Like the star, which directed the wise men to Bethlehem, the word of God directs men to heavenly glory. It is "the power of God and the wisdom of God to the *salvation* of those who believe." It is "a savour of life unto life." With anguish of spirit, the soul exclaims, "What shall I do to be saved?" Like the wounded hart, with the spear of the hunter in its side, the man flies to every means of hope. Sinking into despair, he hears a voice from the word, "Come unto me. Look unto me and be ye *saved*." "Thou shalt be with me in paradise." He knows that his Redeemer lives. He shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. So Abel, and Enoch, and a great multitude, which no man can

number, have been *saved* by the word of God. It is the word of *life*, *eternal* life.

III. The word of God is wonderful, on account of the complete evidence of its divine authority. Whatever may be the excellencies of Mahometanism, or of Paganism, and if we believe some infidels, they are great; still they are essentially wanting in efficacy, to guide or comfort their votaries; because they are not supported by any satisfactory evidence; they are not patronized by any adequate authority; they want the sanction of God. God is not pledged to fulfil their promises, to execute their threatenings, to support their laws. Though in many instances they make high claims to inspiration; yet before the eye of investigation, they vanish like meteors of the night. By what evidence, except his brooding melancholy, which led him to fly to the desert and dwell in a cavern, did Numa satisfy the Romans, that their laws and religion were revealed to him by the goddess Egeria. By what evidence did Capac and Ocollo convince the Peruvians, that they were the children of the Sun, descended from heaven, to be their teachers and guardians? By what evidence did Mahomet prove his converse with Gabriel, his ascent to heaven, and his numerous pretended revelations?

Were the word of God ever so pure in its precepts, ever so noble in its promises, ever so alluring in its virtues, it could have little glory, were it deficient in evidence of its divine authority. Its transcendent doctrines, its celestial prospects, its immortal rewards, might only tantalize men with delusive hopes. Here it may be proper to acknowledge, that some of the

heathen uttered some excellent things, excited some consoling hopes; but they spoke without authority; they could not ensure the hopes which they excited. Like a palace of ice on the bank of the Neva, which at a distance, sparkles like a hill of diamonds; but within is a cold and dismal dwelling; such were the splendid theories of pagan philosophy. Such would be the word of God were not its high authority clear and certain.

But here I must stop. An entire discourse would not be sufficient to exhibit the evidence in support of divine revelation. Had I time, I might illustrate the harmony of the various parts, written in different ages and countries, by persons educated in different habits and opinions; and subject to different prejudices. Not only the princes and nobles, the poets and the prophets of scripture; but the fishermen and herdsmen, though they have a different style in writing, all give the same just and sublime views of God, of the soul, and the eternal world; they all present the same views of fallen man, of salvation by a Redeemer, and of divine providence. A living coal from the altar of God has touched all their lips, and they all speak in the same strains of heavenly love. Who taught these obscure sons of Abraham to wing their flight, far beyond the confines of time? Who led them on, through the gate of heaven, to draw the curtain, that we might see the throne of God, and hear the harps of angels? Was this the fruit of their superiour application and genius? This would be a greater miracle than any which is supposed. Did they learn these sublime strains in the celebrated seminaries of Egypt, of

Greece, or Rome? You have just heard the babblings of their philosophers. They spake, therefore, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I might, also, show the simplicity and majesty of their style, far surpassing the boldest flights of Grecian song, or Roman eloquence. I might summon from all antiquity a host of historians to confirm many facts of the sacred volume.

Miracles *demonstrate* the authority of revelation. If God arrest the luminaries of heaven, or raise the dead to confirm any truth, God himself becomes pledged to support that truth. No *bad* man would be the author of such a holy religion. No *good* man would forge such a work, and ascribe it to God.

Prophecy carries irresistible evidence to every age and country, who hear its voice. I might mention the present state of Nineveh. Zephaniah prophesied, that Nineveh would be a desolation, dry like a wilderness. Nineveh *is* a desolation; her ruins are ruined. Of Tyre a prophet declared, that "Her songs should cease, that she should be a place to spread nets upon." A few fishermen are now her only inhabitants. I might mention the Jews, as so many living witnesses, for the truth of prophecy. It was prophesied that they should be scattered over the world; they *are* scattered over the world. It was prophesied that they should be a bye-word; they *are* a bye-word. I might mention the present state of Babylon, of Jerusalem, of Palestine, of Noph, and Egypt, to confirm the prophecies respecting them. The Arabians are a standing *miracle*, a nation of *witnesses* in support of revelation. It was prophesied of their ancestor, that in his posterity his hand should be against every man, that yet he

should dwell in the presence of his brethren, that he should be a wild man. This perfectly agrees with the history of the Arabs in every age. No man can devoutly study their character without increasing his faith and religious wonder. Though generally hostile to the human race, and of course frequently assailed by the most formidable powers; yet neither the Alexanders, nor Cæsars, nor Buonapartes, those thunder-bolts of war, have been able to conquer the Arabians. Even when separated into contemptible clans of robbers and pirates, they remain invincible; they brave the most powerful fleets and armies of Europe; their most celebrated commanders retire from their towns with vexation and dismay. Is not the evidence in favour of the gospel clear and irresistible? Is not the word of God wonderful?

REFLECTIONS.

I. How cruel and barbarous are those infidels, who labour to destroy the influence of divine revelation. Some men, not only disbelieve revelation themselves, but are zealous to destroy the faith of others. Revelation gives us all our knowledge of another world, and is our *only* guide to future glory; yet infidels, more cunning than the serpent, and often more secret than pestilence or death, make every effort to extinguish this light, to bury the world in darkness and despair. Conscience is sacrificed, genius is prostituted, the world is ransacked, to furnish the means of their fatal purposes. Some write travels;* some, poems;† some, sarcastic essays;§ to give the lie to Moses. The lava of the

* Brydone. † Barlow. § Tom Paine.

mountains is tortured and suborned to give a false testimony against revelation.

They would bar up the only harbour, which leads to the celestial city; they would tear away the only bridge across the gulf of death. They would rend the sun from the moral system, regardless of the darkness and horrour, which would follow. They would take away heaven, and leave no substitute.

Discard the gospel, and where are we? Then, what consolations sustain the heart in the long night of *adversity?* What hope cheers the mind, looking into the world of spirits? In that awful moment, when the soul is leaving the world, when it needs the strongest consolations, then would infidels tear away the last hope of man, and shroud the prospect with endless despair. Are they not rivals of that destroying angel, who carried guilt and death into the bowers of Eden?

II. If the gospel be so glorious, then Missionary Societies are pious and laudable institutions. The object of the gospel is so great, so sublime, that no means should be spared to insure success. To combine the experience, the exertions, the contributions of a Society, is to multiply the probabilities of success. Such associations, therefore, address their reasonable claims of support, to persons of most profound wisdom, of the most illustrious talents, of the most opulent possessions. Nothing is too important to be consecrated to this sacred cause. While acting alone, man is imbecile and defenceless; his sphere is limited; his efforts are inefficient. Like a solitary star, struggling with darkness, his most powerful efforts

may not be perceived; but united with others, like a celestial constellation, they produce a field of light and glory. In all their important concerns, therefore, men have been led to form associations. Mutually conscious of their individual weakness, they have spontaneously united together to accomplish their great enterprizes. Hence societies of various names, in almost every profession; hence the origin of civil government. Blessed be God! many of our people in this country; many of our great men, many of our rich men, are patrons of Missionary Societies. Our governours are presidents, our legislators are benefactors of such Societies. Very much has been done; very much is now doing. The holy zeal burns through the land. Nor are we the only people engaged in this good work. All Christendom seems to be roused by the same impulse. From Petersburg to Calcutta, we hear the same strains of Christian benevolence. *But I am silent*.....I hear the angel of justice exclaim, "To raise thy pious wonder, to kindle thy sacred emulation, look up to the London Missionary Society and the British Foreign Bible Society, those noblest associations ever formed in our world, and the parents of nearly all the similar societies which now exist. Their bishops, their legislators, their nobles, their royal princes, are the patrons or presidents of such Societies. They with other Societies, are engaged in translating the word of God into all the principal languages of the world. Their missionaries, like the angels in the fields of Bethlehem, are proclaiming peace on earth and good will to man, from the line to the poles; myriads hang on their lips, and

join in the praises of Immanuel. Their missionaries have planted the rose of Sharon among the snows of Iceland and Labrador; they have conveyed the balm of life to the coast of New-Holland, to China, to India, and the isles of the Pacific Ocean. They have opened channels for the river of life among the mountains of Caucasus, and in the burning deserts of Africa. The banner of the cross waves on the towers of Mahomet, and the Wolga and the Ganges listen to the songs of Zion. On the other side of the flood, in the land of your brothers, whose blood rolls in your hearts, you witness every thing which is catholic or liberal, every thing which is enterprising and generous, every thing which is opulent and grand in the cause of goodness and philanthropy. Such extensive and magnificent benevolence is displayed in no other nation of the globe. Never did a nation stand so high in virtue and glory. No where else has the empire of Christian charity risen so illustrious and sublime. Such are the two Englands. Like a parent and child, they have united together to promote the glorious gospel. *Shall* they not, like the two luminaries of heaven, continue to aid each other in giving light and glory to the world? Must not our swords turn to plough-shares and our spears to pruning-hooks?

III. If the gospel be so glorious, ought we not to bless God for our Christian privileges, and do all in our power to extend these favours to others. By the gospel ministry the revelation of God is explained, established, and enforced. The ministry of reconciliation is the river of life. Can we listen to the instructions of our spiritual guides; can we look on the chart

of life which they spread before us, without emotions of praise and thanksgiving? Do not the peals, which summon us to the house of God, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and the strains of heavenly mercy, which there proclaim pardon and glory to penitent sinners, excite us all to exclaim, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of hosts!" Shall we not convey this divine light to others? This holy cause will infallibly triumph. The idols of paganism, the temples of infidel philosophy, will vanish before the light of the gospel. The Christian missionary goes on a voyage of benevolence. So angels fly through the heavens, sail from world to world, to promote the same glorious cause. Rulers and legislators are never so entirely the ministers of God for good, as when they support the banner of the cross. They wisely build hospitals, and found seminaries for the public good; why should they not regard the higher interests of man, the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom? Why should they not protect the church in "the wilderness," and "the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth?" When nations shall understand their best interests, then kings, or rulers, instead of waging ungodly wars, shall be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers of the church. Aaron and Moses shall lead the people to the heavenly Canaan.

So familiar are we with the doctrines and duties of revelation, that we can hardly conceive the immense importance of conveying it to others. Were it not for the light of this gospel, we, *we*, this day might have been worshipping in the temple of Mars, or shouting the praises of Bacchus, or offering our chil-

dren on the altar of Moloch. The poor will certainly then contribute their mite, and the rich their silver and gold, an offering to the glorious gospel.—But I recollect where I am. The metropolis of New-England is more distinguished for its princely benefactions, than, any other place in the world; it is a fountain whose streams gladden the city of God. No persuasion would prevent your offering to the Lord the *present* which you have brought to his house. Angels, who hover over the assemblies of the saints, witness your pious sacrifices. Already He, who sees the end from the beginning, has prepared a reward for those who cordially support his cause. That Saviour, who was present at a contribution in the temple of Jerusalem, is present now. He will accompany those who receive your gifts from seat to seat. The recording angel will notice the widow's mite. The names of every donor will be written in the book of divine remembrance. In the great day, when the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels; when the earth shall be on fire, and the heavens pass away with a great noise, and you shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then will he say to every one, who gave a cup of water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

PSALM xlv, 6.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

God is the greatest and most sublime object in the universe. Every thing respecting Him, demands the teachable and serious attention of mankind. But God as a Saviour, "God in Christ," reconciling the world to himself, is the most interesting character of the Divine Being. The most essential part of Scripture relates to the Redeemer of the world. His name, his offices, his attributes, give interest and life to the sacred page. It is, therefore, a duty of the first importance to study his character, as it is *revealed*, to learn the relation, which he bears to man. In vain do we apply to any other, than the inspired teachers; in vain do we go back to the remotest antiquity, and explore the records of Chaldean or Egyptian learning; in vain do we ask the sages of Greece or Rome, to describe Immanuel. The lectures of their philosophers, and the songs of their bards declare, "We know him not." In vain do we consult the schools

and seminaries of modern times, to learn whether he ought to be human, angelic, or divine ; their elevated science, while it makes surprising displays of the human intellect, is bewildered in the mysteries of redemption, and confounds their disciples with opposite responses. Nor shall we be more safe in appealing to ancient or modern creeds, councils, or spiritual tribunals. Athanasius was deposed from the ministry, and driven into banishment, because he advocated the Saviour's divinity ; and in the same age, Arius was exiled and excommunicated, because he opposed the doctrine. In the reign of Henry VIII, Papists and Protestants were burning at the same time. Is it safe to trust such baleful meteors, to show us the way to heaven ? To the law and the testimony let us resort, that we may know Jesus Christ. The evidence of many other facts and doctrines is derived from *various* sources. The rivers and mountains, the sun and stars, proclaim in every language, the existence and glory of their Creator. Daily events around us, the changes and revolutions of empires, announce the *Providence* of God. Our own experience, our knowledge of others, the history of man, confirm our belief of human depravity ; yet no where but in his *word*, which he has magnified above all his works, is made manifest the desire of nations, the Saviour of the world. Neither philosophy, nor metaphysics, nor any other science, would have discovered the doctrine or character of the Redeemer. We are, therefore, confined to the sacred oracles. What they declare of this wonderful personage we ought implicitly to believe. We shall not question the truth, the propriety, or the

necessity of what we read. It is entirely beyond the limits of human reason to prescribe what should be the powers, the attributes, or offices of the Saviour. To the patriarchs and prophets, and writers of the New Testament we appeal, as affording *all* the information which can be obtained. To human deductions and the reasoning of worldly wisdom we say, "Be far away, far away, ye profane."

I now proceed to mention a few texts, which have satisfied my own mind, respecting the divine character of Jesus Christ, without an *attempt* learnedly to discuss the subject, or to answer objections, or define mysteries.

No reasonable doubt can be admitted, but our text refers to the true God, to Jehovah. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In other parts of Scripture, the original word is applied to the ONE God. "I am Jehovah, thy God." This is the same word, and Jehovah is certainly the true God. So in Isaiah, "O God of Israel, thy Saviour;" and is not He the true God? And again in Hosea, "I am Jehovah, thy God." Where, therefore, it is said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," the address is made to the *true God*, to the Almighty, to Jehovah. So far then we are safe and sure. If this passage, therefore, can with any *certainty* be applied to Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ, with equal certainty, is proved to be the true God. Will you look at Heb. i, 8, and say whether an inspired writer has not applied these very words to Jesus Christ. If this be the fact, we shall discover *his* creed on this point, and have the authority of his opinion, to direct our own. To Heb. i, 8, then let us

turn. "But unto the *Son*, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." The Psalmist in our text had indubitably addressed the one God; the apostle here applies the same words to Jesus Christ, to the Son. Is not the Son, therefore, the true God? Is not this a fair and sound inference? If *several* such applications of texts by *inspired* writers should be adduced, though the method be very simple, must not the evidence of the doctrine be *decisive*, while we escape the errours to which we are ever liable, while reasoning *a priori*, or supporting our constructions of texts, more indefinite, by long metaphysical deductions? Can we then find other passages applied to Jesus Christ, which originally referred to God alone? Look at Isaiah viii, 13, 14. "Sanctify Jehovah of hosts himself . . . . and he shall be for a sanctuary, but for *a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.*" If this passage, by any adequate authority, can be applied to the Saviour, will it not go far to dispel the doubts which may oppress any candid minds? In this inquiry will not the opinion of St. Peter be decisive? To him then we repair. 1 Peter ii, 7, 8. Speaking of Jesus Christ, "who is precious to believers," he says, "The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, *and a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence.*" The same kind of irresistible evidence is seen in Rev. xxii, 6. "The *Lord God* of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things, which must shortly be done." Observe the Lord *God* sent his angel; then read the 16th verse. "I *Jesus* have sent my angel to

testify unto you these things in the churches." Here I see not but "the Lord God," and "Jesus," are the same. Jesus speaks in the same style, and assumes the same prerogative as "the Lord God." Isaiah vi. "I saw also the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple, and one cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts;—then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Jehovah of hosts; and he said go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." As the prophet, unquestionably, had a view of God, of Jehovah, any just application of the passage to Jesus Christ will, equally, prove that Jesus Christ is Jehovah. But this has been done, not by party zeal, nor inquisitorial power; but by Apostolic inspiration. John xii, 37. "But though he (Jesus Christ) had done so many miracles before them; yet they believed not on him, that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled, *He* hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, or understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw *his* glory," that is, the glory of Jesus Christ, "and spake of him." Therefore, unless St. John did not understand Isaiah, nor know whom he saw, Jesus Christ is Jehovah.

In the same manner St. Paul appropriates to the Saviour an address which was certainly made to God. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even

thousands of angels——thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men." Should we learn that Calvin, or Augustine, or Athanasius, had applied this passage to Jesus Christ, we should perhaps view them as rash interpreters, swayed by party zeal; but should we not say, "Prove the applications to be just, and we yield the contest." But the inspiration of Eph. iv. 7. decides the question. "But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ—wherefore, *he* saith when he ascended on high; *he* led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; therefore Christ and God are the same.

Speaking of Israel, when they sinned in the wilderness and were destroyed by serpents, Moses tells the people, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah." Undoubtedly St. Paul understood this text, and knew that *God* was tempted, when he said, "Neither let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them tempted, and were destroyed by serpents." If one inspired writer make a direct reference or address to God, and a second apply the same to Jesus Christ, if this does not establish his divinity, I am utterly at a loss how this, or any other doctrine can be established by Scripture authority. Permit me then to adduce a few more passages, of this class. Psalm cii. "I said, O my God . . . , of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth." Heb. i, 10. "But unto the Son . . . . . Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth." This requires no comment. The same address is made to God, and the Son. Here is the force of the evidence; and

in this view, what is gained by those, who plead that heavens and earth mean the Christian and Jewish dispensations? You all recollect 1 Kings viii, 39. In his prayer to God, Solomon says, "Thou, even thou *only* knowest the hearts of the children of men;" and God says, Jer. vii. "I Jehovah search the heart, and try the reins." Now, permit me to repeat Rev. ii, 23. Remember this was the revelation of Jesus Christ. He saith, I am he who liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore,—and all the church shall know that *I* am he, who searcheth the reins and hearts." This knowledge Christ possesses, and Jehovah declares this to be, exclusively, *his* prerogative. Are they not one?

If any fact is familiar, if any thing recorded in the book of God is certain, it is the appearance of the Almighty on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the Law. Exod. xix and xx. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain.——And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo I come unto thee in a thick cloud.——And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. ——And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire.——And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God." Here was God, attended with undescribable tokens of sublimity and grandeur. Now, if any inspired writer has taught, that all this was effected by the presence and power of Jesus Christ, it may satisfy us respecting his divinity, and relieve our anxiety, while we render him religious homage. Heb. xii, 24, 25, 26. "And to Jesus the Mediator

——See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," that is, Jesus Christ; "for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth," namely Moses, "much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him, that speaketh from heaven," that is Christ, speaking in the gospel, "*whose voice then shook the earth.*" that is, the voice of Jesus Christ, which shook mount Sinai, when he descended in fire. Thus the writer of Hebrews evidently teaches, that it was the voice of Jesus Christ, that shook the earth at mount Sinai, but Moses and Habakkuk have abundantly confirmed the fact, that it was the glory of *God*, which "covered the heavens; burning coals went forth under his feet; the perpetual hills did bow; the remote land of Midian trembled."

I will select only a single passage more of this class. Rev. i, 17, 18. The Son of man says, "Fear not, *I* am the first and the last,——I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." When you compare this with the language of Jehovah, in Isaiah xliv, 6, is any room left to hang a doubt on? "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts, *I* am the first, and *I* am the last." Are not these the declarations of the same person? While we believe the same works justly ascribed to God and Christ, and the same perfections claimed by both, and these surpass all created attributes, we can perceive no reason to question their equal divinity.

With religious caution, I proceed to a few other passages of another class, selecting only those, which are plain and easy; for humble are my limits, as

well as talents, leaving no room for argument or elaborate illustration. Happily it is not the greatest number of proofs, which leaves the strongest or clearest convictions on the mind. This subject has, I think, suffered much by being cumbered with proofs multiplied and ambiguous. This certainly ought to be avoided; for the remark of St. Austin is very just, "That no point is to be mistaken with more danger, none to be studied with more diligence, none to be understood with more profit." Rom. ix, 5. "Of whom, (the Israelites,) as concerning the flesh, the Christ came, who is over all, *God blessed for ever.*" May not the four and twenty elders bow down to the man, who can express the doctrine in plainer words? True, a different rendering has been given to this passage, as well as others; but after all which has been said and written on the text, I think the candid will allow that this is the most literal and direct translation. Though much has been said, respecting different translations and readings, I do not think the doctrine loses any material evidence, by the most exact translations, or the severest scrutiny of various readings. Some few passages may be rendered more, some less favorable to the doctrine, than in our version. After saying this, you may, perhaps, feel a right to require a specimen of what may be effected by different translations.

The principal demands, if I mistake not, are on the three following passages, 1 John v, 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven," &c. It is asserted that this is an interpolation, supported by only one single manuscript more ancient than the art of printing. Here I hold no controversy.——Acts xx, 28. "Feed

the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." This has been rendered,—"the church of the Lord," and to this we make no formal objection; for it appears that "three readings of the text are found in the Greek manuscripts and versions, "the church of God,"—" the church of the Lord,"—and "the church of the Lord and God;" and from Griesbach and Wetstein it appears that no very ancient manuscripts read "church of God," and many manuscripts, and several versions, as the Armenian, and Ethiopic, read—" church of the Lord,"—church of the Lord and of God is the reading of the great majority; but the most ancient manscripts read,—" church of the Lord;" yet I might add, that a very respectable Socinian writer* contends for the present version, "the church of God."

The other passage is 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." Instead of God was manifest in the flesh, it has been rendered, "he who was manifest." This text I have not quoted; "for several manuscripts, versions, and fathers read *who* or *which*," referring to the word mystery; though I do not discover deep sense in saying, that the mystery of godliness was manifest in the flesh, and received up to glory.

But I am bound now to state, that some texts admit, and in justice require a translation *more* favourable to the doctrine, than our common version. I will trespass on your patience with only two or three. 1 John v, 20. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

* Rev. G. Wakefield,

This passage may, and I think *ought* to be read, "We are in him, who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ, *he* is the true God and eternal life." Is not this a triumphant declaration of the Saviour's divinity?

2 Pet. i, 1. "Simon Peter, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." A slight improvement in the translation renders the assertion of our doctrine more forcible, viz. "Through the righteousness *of our God and Saviour*, Jesus Christ." A similar increase of evidence is discovered in Titus ii, 13. "Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." These words, Dr. Doddridge remarks, might be fairly rendered, "Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He quotes Mr. Fleming, who asserts, that we never read the Father appears to men. Of the same opinion was the learned Beza. This passage is thus translated by Dr. A. Clark. "And the appearing of the glory of the great God, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ." In all these passages, to name no more, is an evident increase of proof in favour of our doctrine.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, or Sire of eternity, the Prince of Peace." What child born, what son given, is the mighty God, unless it be the son of Mary, the seed of the woman?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word

was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This accords with other passages. "A body hast thou prepared me." If these proofs do not establish the doctrine, I ask, and I anxiously ask, what proofs, what form of words, would establish the doctrine? Indeed this has been the general belief of the church, with little interruption, to the present time. In the next age after the apostles, Ignatius, who was made bishop of Antioch by St. John, wrote thus to the church of Smyrna, "I glorify Jesus Christ our God." To his friend Polycarp he wrote, "Expect him, who is above all time, the invisible One, who was made visible for us."

Justin, who suffered as a martyr, A. D. 163, says to the court, "I am too mean to say any thing (of Jesus Christ) becoming his infinite deity." A writer in the early part of the third century inquires, "Who doth not know, that the works of Irenæus, Melito, and all other Christians, do confess Christ to be both God and man?"

Irenæus, who was a disciple of St. John, says of Christ, "He united man to God." Clemens of Alexandria, about the close of the second century says, "Believe, therefore, in one God, who is God and man." In a letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians, A. D. 116 or 17, he thus expresses himself, "There is one Physician, God incarnate." In the narrative of Polycarp's martyrdom, which he suffered March 26, A. D. 147, it is said, "Through his only begotten son, to whom be glory, and honour, and power, and majesty for ever and ever." Milo, bishop of Sardis, about A. D. 170 says, "that Jesus Christ is the true

and everlasting God." So overwhelming is the evidence, that the divinity of the Saviour was acknowledged in the early ages of the church. In further confirmation of this, if further confirmation be possible, I may add, these primitive fathers of the church applied all those texts in the Old Testament, to Jesus Christ, which represent God, as making himself visible to men. In this, as I have shown, they followed the example of those holy men, moved by the Holy Spirit, who wrote the New Testament. "The *Lord* appeared to Abram in the plain of Mamre." "And Abram stood before the *Lord*." "I am the God of Bethel." "I appeared unto Abram, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of *God Almighty*, but by my name *Jehovah* was I not known to them." These and several other similar passages, I might adduce, all of which are applied by Justin Martyr, to Jesus Christ.

Irenæus explains some of those texts with several others, in the same manner, as "The Lord came to Adam,"—"The Almighty God, even the Lord hath spoken,"—"In Judah God is known." Though these quotations do not prove the doctrine, yet they certainly show what were the opinions of the pastors of the primitive churches.

With a few of the many reflections which might be made, I close the subject.

1. The doctrine teaches us that Jesus Christ might make an *atonement* for the redemption of mankind.

I am not tenacious of the word; but the idea which I receive from *atonement*, appears so familiar on the

sacred page, that I can hardly conceive a formal proof necessary. Of what benefit were all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, unless they exhibit the necessity of a *real* sacrifice or atonement? What wisdom, what meaning, what humanity, can be discovered in the bloody rites of the Mosaic dispensation, unless they are types and emblems of a sacrifice not then made? Accordingly, as soon as this sacrifice was made on Calvary, those sacrifices all ceased, as the tapers of night, before the rising morn.

It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin; but the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many, and to bear our sins in his own body. He appears as the substitute of the sinner. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." "He was delivered for our offences." "He gave himself for our sins." "Christ hath once suffered for our sins." "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." "I lay down my life for the sheep." Is not here the idea of *substitution*, or a vicarious offering distinctly presented?

Is not the notion of a direct sacrifice equally certain? "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." "He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." He "put away sins by the sacrifice of himself." So reconciliation was effected between God and man. "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." "It pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself." Were such passages rare and solitary, we might consider them figurative; but when we find them so numerous, so frequently used by the different writers of the sacred volume, though they have received

a different construction from men of great learning and powerful minds, I am *compelled* to believe the doctrine of atonement. The language of patriarchs and legislators, of prophets and apostles, whether proclaimed in the wilderness of Arabia, or on the banks of the Jordan; whether addressed to the churches of Asia, or the city of the Cæsars, announces Jesus Christ as the *propitiation* for the sins of the world. But is not this beyond the power of a man, or of any creature? "None can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious," too precious to be redeemed by man. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil?" "Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" If a man should devote and sacrifice himself, it could not redeem his soul. If all the race of man were to sacrifice themselves, this would not procure their redemption. He then, who is the Redeemer of the world, must have more weight of character, more worth, more dignity and excellence, than all the human race. No finite being can give a ransom for the sins of the world. But if Jesus Christ be really God with us, then *his* merit is infinite; his divinity is necessary to his atonement. So clearly evident is this, that generally those, who deny his divinity, reject the doctrine of atonement. This is consistent. The two doctrines stand, or fall together. If Christ be divine, he has merit to redeem the world.

2. We learn from the subject that Jesus Christ can *govern* the world.

It was foretold that "the government should be upon his shoulder;" that "he should be king of Zion." All power in heaven and earth is in his hand. All this is credible if he be the "mighty God;" all this is certain, if he be "Jehovah our righteousness;" but is not this impossible, if he be a mere man, or a dependant creature of any grade? If he be divine, then he is present every where, and can direct all events, however numerous or widely extended. Nothing is too great, too little, or too mysterious for him to accomplish. His steps are in deep waters, clouds and darkness are round about; he does all his pleasure, nor gives account of any of his matters. He can change the tendency of actions, and render those salutary, which apparently were big with mischief and ruin. Nebuchadnezzar sets up an image, and commands all, on penalty of death, to bow down and render religious homage to his splendid idol. The tendency of this measure was to suppress freedom of thought, and extinguish the last spark of true religion. The result was directly opposite; to advance the cause of divine truth, and religious liberty.

He can produce effects directly the reverse from the design and intention of the persons acting. The brethren of Joseph intended merely to indulge their envy, his mistress to satiate her revenge, his master to punish his supposed crime; but God by these measures prepared an eminent Statesman for a great nation, and made provision for the house of Jacob, till the time arrived for them to march and take possession of the land flowing with milk and honey. The persecution of the primitive Christians was intended to crush the good

cause, and extirpate the name from the annals of the world; but while it scattered the disciples, it inflamed their zeal, produced a powerful sympathy in their behalf, and greatly promoted their design. So does intolerance always defeat itself, and build up that interest, which it intended to destroy. He that holdeth the stars in his right hand, raised up Cyrus, a pagan, to the empire of the world, to be his servant, to deliver his people from captivity. All things, from the atom floating in the air, to the globes of heaven; all events, from the fall of a sparrow to the redemption of a world, are under his control. He changes the hearts of kings, demolishes thrones, and raises up empires. He walks on the wings of the wind, thunders in the heavens, wheels the planets in their orbs, produces all the revolutions of times and seasons. According to his promise, he is every where with his people to the end of the world.

3. From the dignity of the Saviour, we learn how suitable a being he is to judge the world at the great day.

To judge the deserts of men, it is not only necessary that all their actions should be known; but their talents, motives, and affections. What mere man can take cognizance of all these in all ages? Who but God knows all the secrets desires and designs of men and angels? Who but God can weigh their worth or ill desert?

But all judgment is committed to the Son; and if he is Jehovah, who searches the heart and tries the reins, he is a suitable Judge to come in the clouds of heaven, to command the angels, to raise the dead, to gather

them before his bar. He has power to blot out the stars, to quench the sun, to burn the world. He knows where every child of Adam sleeps, on the land, or in the sea. He knows the place of every grave yard, of every battle, of every city, overwhelmed by earthquakes, or volcanoes, by floods or fires. Patriarchs and prophets, kings with their subjects, generals with their armies, Adam and all his children, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Consoling is the thought to the lamb of the Redeemer's flock, to the babe in Christ, trembling at the splendours of the great day. This Judge is his friend, the friend of sinners, his Saviour, who took little children in his arms, who healed the sick and comforted the weeping widow. He, who pardoned sinners, who spent his life to reform and save sinners, who died for their redemption, is their Judge. He knows our weakness, sympathizes in our infirmities, and does not need that we should make a splendid show of our piety, by praying in the corner of the street, by multiplying our sabbaths and our new moons, or other ordinances of our invention, to prove our goodness or sincerity. He, who sees our hearts, and will duly notice every benevolent wish, every secret whisper of devotion, and every cup of water given to a disciple, is our Judge. The doctrine is full of hope and encouragement, to the humble, trembling spirit, oppressed with a sense of unworthiness and guilt.

When every one has given an account of himself to God; when the examination closes, the gracious Judge will say; (oh may we all hear the joyful declaration,) "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit

the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

To those on the left, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Down they sink, while the heaven and earth have been kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. The Saviour with all the righteous ascends to his Father and their Father, to join in the hallelujahs of angels; —"Glory, and honour, and immortality to Him, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, who was slain, for ever and ever." AMEN.

SERMON V.

ISAIAH ix, 6.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.

THAT mankind are in a lapsed state, that the proper course of their passions is disturbed, that they are guilty and miserable, are truths, which have been extensively acknowledged in every age of the world. Another wonderful fact, equally attested is, that from the most early records of time, the nations, or the more enlightened of them, from Europe to China, have expected some mighty Teacher and Saviour, to deliver the world from its ignorance, crimes, and miseries. Their precise view of this august Personage have been various; but all have agreed in the opinion of his wonderful goodness, wisdom and power. This desire of all nations is evidently the person of the text. He is also the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. He is also *man*. The terms child and son are literally applicable only to man. The same may remarked of the term *born*. Angels are not born, human beings alone are born. It is doubtless the

same person spoken of by the Angel. "Unto you is born a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." The object of this discourse is to show that Jesus Christ is literally and truly MAN.

I. All the information and propehcies concerning him, previous to his being born, naturally led the world to expect he would be a man. This would be inferred from the manner in which he is first mentioned in Scripture. "The seed of the woman, it shall bruise thy head." What could the seed of a woman be but a man? But a remarkable peculiarity is here observed. The father is not mentioned. As a man, he was to be exclusively the son or seed of the woman. The history of the event confirms this construction of the prophecy. In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a *woman*. A son had been born but he was the child of a woman. The Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plain of Mamre; but what was his form, his appearance? It was the form of a *man*. "And he looked, and lo! three men stood before him. And he said, My Lord!" As far as he had any apprehension, any conception that this was his Saviour, must he not have considered him as a *man*. Does not this fact now indicate to us, that he who is our Deliverer, our Saviour, must be a man? He did appear as a man.

In the same manner did he apppear to Jacob. "There wrestled a *man* with him until the breaking of the day." Though Jacob said that he had seen God, and though the angel implies the same,—"As a prince hast thou power with God," yet he is also called man. He *appeared* as a man, he *was* a man.

In the same form did he appear to Joshua at the siege of Jericho. "There stood a *man* over against him." By this event it was made known to Joshua, and to the world, that their Redeemer should be a man, that he should partake of flesh and blood, that he should be made flesh, and dwell among us. How dignified was this man! Though Joshua had fallen prostrate before him, as if this were not enough, he says to him, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place where thou standest is holy." As if he had said, "You are in the presence of adorable majesty, therefore offer the highest kind of worship."

I might before have mentioned the prophecy of Balaam, which would lead Israel and the world to expect a *human* deliverer." I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." A long series of ages intervenes, of fifteen hundred years." "A star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Star denotes a prince or illustrious man. Christ himself is called a star. This prophecy, indeed, is supposed to have an immediate reference to king David, and was fulfilled when he smote Moab, and "measured them with a line," so that the Moabites became David's servants. 2 Sam. 8. Yet the Saviour was doubtless the ultimate object. Perhaps this prophecy of Baalam, who was of the East, being preserved by tradition, in that country, might induce the wise men, on seeing some uncommon star over the land of Israel, to go and inquire for the child, born king of the Jews. The whole suggests the idea of an illustrious *man.* In Ezek. chap. 1 we read, that by the river Chebar, the prophet saw

the likeness of a glorious throne, upon which was "the likeness, as the appearance of a man." Afterwards the prophet informs us that this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; but he was in the form of a man.

The same doctrine is taught by Zechariah. "I saw by night, and beheld a man riding upon a red horse." This man in verse 11. is called the angel of the Lord.

Although, in the burning bush, no form of a man was visible to Moses, yet he heard a voice which he understood. Indeed, if we accede to the general opinion of the church universal, in every age, that the appearance of the Lord, and the angel of the Lord, at various times, before the advent of Christ, was the Messiah, the Saviour, it will greatly strengthen the idea, that he was to appear in human form, and to be a man.

Gen. i, 26. And God said, "Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." In view of this passage, is it unnatural to suppose, and believe, that when God had created man, he appeared to him in the form of a man, in the same form, which he certainly did assume, in repeated instances, when he rendered himself visible to Joshua, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and others.

"And the Lord God brought every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to Adam, to see what he would call them." Does not this seem to be a transaction conducted in such a manner, as to render human language, and the appearance of a man highly probable?

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God *walking* in the garden, and Adam and his wife hid themselves. And the Lord *called* unto Adam. And he said, I heard thy voice, and hid myself." If this scene be candidly examined, I think we shall find that God manifested himself by a human voice, and in a human form. How could Adam and Eve think of hiding themselves from God, unless they actually saw his person, or had been used to see it, and now expected its appearance again? Could they be so stupid as to hide themselves from a mere *voice*, among the trees? Could they be ashamed of their nakedness before a mere voice, a noise in the air? Could they hear a *voice walking* in the garden? But if you suppose they saw a form, a man, walking in the garden, then all is probable and natural.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, where is thy brother? And Cain said, I know not. And God said, What hast thou done?—And Cain said, My punishment is greater than I can bear, from thy face I shall be hid." When it is so often said that the Lord, that Jehovah, that the Lord God appeared, and sat, and stood, and walked, and spake, and talked, is it not very hard to suppose that nothing was manifest but a voice, a sound? Is it not much more natural to suppose that the voice, the articulate human voice, was accompanied by the form of a man? Is not this very much confirmed by the well known fact, that he often did assume the form of a man? From the whole we infer that the information and prophecies concerning Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, all go to prove that he was to be a real

man, that such must have been the expectation of the Jews.

We have omitted to mention the appearance of this mighty personage to Gideon, and to Manoah and his wife, and some others in the form of a man. Scripture declares he was a man. Phil. ii, 8. "He was found in fashion as a man." 1 Tim. ii, 5. "The man Christ Jesus." 1 Cor. xv, 47. "The first man is from the earth, the second man is the Lord from heaven."

II. We proceed to show from matter of fact, that he was truly man. The history of his birth, and life, and death, proves that Jesus Christ was a man. He was born as other children are, and wrapped in swaddling bands. In his infancy he was carried into Egypt. He increased in knowledge and favour with God and man. He had the appetites of a man; he ate, he drank. He had the weakness of a man; he slept, he was weary. He had the passions of a man; he was grieved, he was angry, he rejoiced, he loved, he was pitiful. He was mortal as a man; he was wounded, he was bruised, his blood flowed, his bones were out of joint, his strength was exhausted, he bowed his head, he died—for—he was *man!*

Though we have not time to solve difficulties, or to answer objections, yet the supernatural conception of this wonderful man has met with so powerful opposition, that it may deserve a word of notice. This mystery has induced some of our Unitarian friends to erase from their Bibles those chapters in St. Matthew and Luke which relate the surprising fact. Our reply is very simple, and very short. Besides

the prophecies concerning his being the seed of the woman exclusively, and born of a virgin, as preludes to this event, several parents bore children contrary to the ordinary course of nature. The birth of Isaac was as remarkable, and as miraculous as the birth of Jesus Christ. The mother of Isaac was constitutionally incapable of bearing a child. This alone rendered the thing impossible without the almighty interposition of the Creator. In addition to this, she was advanced to that period of life, in which no woman had ever become a mother. Sarah could no more become a mother without a miracle, than Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when each of them make their objection, they receive for substance the same answer. The reply to Mary was, "With God nothing shall be impossible." To Sarah it was said, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" All these remarks apply with equal force to Elizabeth and Zechariah, who were the parents of John. His birth was altogether as miraculous as that of Jesus Christ.

To these facts we add the birth of Sampson. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, his mother, and said unto her, Behold thou art barren, and bearest not, but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son."

Must all these histories be torn from the sacred volume? Or shall we believe what was foretold in prophecy, and what has been related by inspired historians, concerning the miraculous conception of the man Christ Jesus.

Our improvement will be only a few general reflections, connected with the subject.

I. We see the plausible reason for the success of those who teach that Jesus Christ is a mere man. It is a fact that he is a man. When they urge and prove this, with great learning as they often do, they urge and prove a great truth. This wins the confidence of many, and from being persuaded that Jesus Christ is man, they are led to believe that he is only a man. So a great portion of truth is blended with the greatest errour. A mixture of truth often sanctions, and gives currency to errour. As the most daring crimes are often attended with some palliating circumstance, so the most dangerous errours are generally softened by a mixture of salutary truth. Our Socinian friends, or Unitarian as they choose to be called, say that Jesus Christ was merely a man. We say he was a man. Therefore, unless other things are said of him, unless other attributes are ascribed to him, which do not belong to human nature, all denominations must say, that he is only a man. But when he says "Before Abraham *was*, *I am*," this looks as if he was superiour to Abraham. When he speaks of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, we are compelled to think him somewhat more than man. When this child born is called the mighty God, and is said to be "God over all," and "God with us," then we imagine we do him a mighty wrong to say, that he is no more than man. The Jews, some of them, have been so perplexed with these two widely different characters of their Messiah, as described by their prophets, that they have adopted the notion of two Messiahs. They have believed that one, Ben Ephraim, would appear

in a state of poverty and suffering, that he would fight against Gog, and be slain by Annillus. They have believed that the other Messiah, Ben David, would appear in splendour and glory, that he would conquer and slay Annillus, assemble all Israel, and reign over the whole world.

Such devices have men adopted in every age. So have they separated what God has joined, and believed only half the truth, in order to avoid difficulties and mysteries. But difficulties and mysteries we must believe, or we shall not believe that we have a soul and body, or that we are dependant, yet moral agents, or that Jesus Christ was before Abraham, yet born in the days of Herod the king.

II. We see the errour of those who uniformly elevate the character of Jesus Christ above man, above human virtues and human powers. They place him above man, above angel. If Jesus Christ be really man, then Arius is still further from the fact, further from any true description of Jesus Christ, than Socinus.

Arius taught that Jesus Christ had no human soul, that he had nothing of man in him but his flesh, to which the Logos, or word of God, or superangelic spirit, was united. While he denied his divinity, he rejected his humanity, but gave him a rank between both. He denied that he was a man, but the first and noblest creature which God created, the agent by whom he formed the universe. So far from being man, he was next to God; and so far from being God, he was a creature made by God. Still the different learned men, and they are very learned,

have given somewhat different views of the Redeemer's dignity. The low Arians say that Jesus Christ pre-existed not as the eternal word of the Father, not as the being by whom he made worlds, and who had intercourse with the patriarchs, not as having any rank or employment in the government of the universe.

The Semi-Arians hold that the Son is of a like substance with the Father, that he was from all eternity begotten by the will of the Father.

They all agree that he existed before his incarnation, they all deny that he was the true God, or real man. Therefore, while in some respects they render superiour honours to the immaculate Saviour, none are further from our views of his character, as man, and Mediator.

III. The subject reminds us how far we differ from those who believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, as really as Isaac was the son of Abraham. We can discover no material difference between these and the Semi-Arians just mentioned. Yet in deference to their feelings, as they choose to be considered as a separate class, we mention them so, distinctly. Our eyes see no difference, our ears catch no discordant sounds, our reason discovers no different results. They and the disciples of Arius agree in denying the real humanity of Jesus Christ, they agree in denying his absolute divinity; in saying that he is the eternal Son of God. They disagree in nothing important. In fact, in modern times the term Arian is by the most respectable writers, indiscriminately applied to all those who consider Jesus Christ more than

man, yet subordinate to the Father. The persons to whom we refer do hold that Jesus Christ is more than man, yet subordinate to the Father, therefore they belong to the school of Arius.

The physical impossibility that the Father should produce a Son, coequal with himself, and eternal as himself, needs no proof. The notion of an eternal generation is not merely a mystery, but an impossibility. It is a violent solecism in language to call any being the son of another, who is of the same and equal origin. This, therefore, infallibly destroys the real divinity of the son. No being, who has a beginning, is God. Eternity is a necessary attribute of God. But, fortunately, this I need not prove. For the authors of this theology do not teach that their Redeemer is God, the Eternal, but the Son of God.

For ages, the church has been agitated with the question, in what sense and for what reason is Jesus Christ called the Son of God. I do humbly confess, that, to me the answer is so plain, so easy, so certain, if the most remarkable mistakes had not been common, with the best and wisest men, I would hardly have believed a mistake here to be possible. Take another instance as remarkable. Mark ix, 31. "Jesus Christ taught his disciples and said unto them, the Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he will rise the third day." What can be more plain, more easy, more certain, than the meaning of this passage? "But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him." What then could they understand? Yet they were good and great men. So are they good and

great men who mistake the sonship of Jesus Christ. Afterwards, when Jesus Christ was killed, instead of expecting his resurrection on the third day, as they might, with every reason of hope and triumph, they gave up his cause as lost, lost, for ever lost.

Now listen to Luke i, 35, and see if it be possible to mistake his meaning. "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, THEREFORE, also, that holy thing, or holy person, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Now is it possible that the meaning should be misunderstood, or that any mortal doubt why Jesus Christ is called the Son of God? The power of the highest shall overshadow thee, therefore, thy child shall be called the Son of God. In one word, on account of his miraculous conception he is the Son of God. Could man, could angel, could Deity, express himself more intelligibly? Why then all this dispute respecting the Son of God? Why will men run back to the beginning of eternity, and distract their minds with the notion of an everlasting generation, which is an everlasting impossibility, when the Bible has explained the subject in a different manner, but never, in a single instance, mentioned an eternal Son, nor an everlasting generation? They take away the man Christ Jesus, our kinsman, our brother, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and I know not where they have laid him.

IV. Was Jesus Christ man, then we may all learn what we may be, and what we ought to be. See him, as a son, subject to his parents; at twelve years

of age, hear his wonderful questions; see him advancing in knowledge, growing in favour with God and man. As a learner, see him attending all the rites and ordinances of his church, seeking baptism, and fulfilling all righteousness. As a teacher, he speaks as never man spake. The sturdy unbeliever listens, his mind is enlightened, his heart is softened, his marble eye weeps, his limbs tremble, and he becomes a new man. He blesses Jesus as his faithful minister, comforter, and Saviour. His doctrine drops as the rain, the people are awakened, sanctified, and prepared for glory.

See him, going from one hospitable door to another. He eats and drinks with those who receive him with open arms. But while he receives the bounty of his friends, his silent prayers ascend to heaven for their prosperity, for their comfort, and for their salvation. While he receives the tokens of their respect, he heals their sick, he instructs their families, he saves their souls. He goes about doing good. When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; when the eye saw him, then it gave witness to him. He delivered the poor, who cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. He pardoned the trembling penitent, he comforted the weeping mourners, he raised the dead. When he was reviled and abused, he returned not railing for railing; he blessed those who cursed him, he prayed for his murderers. He

died for *us*, while we were yet enemies, to save us from the wrath of God, to save us from hell. Hosanna to this Son of David! O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let every thing, which hath breath, praise the Lord. Bless the Lord, oh my soul. Praise ye the Lord.

SERMON VI.

HEBREWS xi, 33.

Who through Faith subdued kingdoms.

The mysterious power of God is manifest in producing sublime effects by inadequate causes; stupendous events by trivial means. Moses lifts his rod, and the Red sea is divided. Joshua says, "Sun, stand thou still;" and the planets stop in their course. A little clay opens the eyes of a blind man, and the faith of a mother expels a demon from her daughter.

The faith of feeble mortals is an efficacious engine of God, in governing the world. The faith of David puts to flight the armies of Philistia. The faith of Noah preserves the wreck of the human race, again to cover the earth with the dwellings of joy. The faith of Abraham produces a race of believers, to the end of the world. Faith subdues kingdoms, stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of fire. If eminent advantages do result from faith, the fact should be proclaimed for the encouragement of believers, for the conviction of unbelievers. It is, therefore, the religious duty of Christians not only to

believe, or exercise faith, but to learn its benefits. In gospel faith, God proposes a benefit as well as a duty. Those, therefore, who stop at the duty, without a distinct view of the blessings, rob themselves of immense privileges and consolations. Excepting some general convictions that faith will save the soul, its blessings are, I think, little known or examined. If there be other blessings besides salvation, it is important, according to the value of those blessings, that they be distinctly ascertained. A person may possess the richest gems and jewels; but not knowing their value, they may be useless to him. The richest cordials may produce no benefit when the physician is unacquainted with their effects. The quadrant, and telescope, and compass, so essential in astronomy and navigation, are, in the hands of ignorance, merely so much wood and glass, brass and iron. So a person may be a believer, but not knowing all the advantages of faith, he may lose vast comforts and blessings.

I proceed to mention a few advantages of faith, after explaining what faith is. "Faith is a cordial belief of the divine oracles;" or according to the perfect definition of the apostle, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Faith brings near those things which are far off, and gives the substance, gives the enjoyment of the object, before it is possessed. Faith is itself evidence of the fact. Faith that we shall enjoy a blessing, is proof of its being on the way. The words translated "evidence of things not seen," according to many learned men, is "a strict proof or demonstration." Faith is a strict proof, or demonstration,

a certainty, that the thing will take place. Faith in God that an event will take place, is a demonstration that it will take place, and emboldens the believer to act accordingly. Jonathan believed in God, that he and his armour bearer should take a whole garrison. He proceeded to act according to that faith. The result justified the faith. Because Antinomians and enthusiasts have been fools, and fired their minds with false raptures and visions of glory, we must not rob ourselves of hopes and joys which rest on the promises of God.

The objects of faith are extensive and general. A man may believe, not only to the saving of his soul; but he may have equal faith that God will grant him numerous other favours. Like the men going into the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, he may believe that God will deliver him from his fiery trials. Like Jacob he may believe that God will prosper his journey through life, and spread his table with plenty. But we hasten to mention some of the privileges and blessings of faith.

I. We hardly need mention that the man of faith believes to the saving of his soul.

Notwithstanding his unworthiness and his crimson guilt, since the Redeemer has come, since atonement has been made, the believer trusts in God for pardon and eternal life. Looking back to his guilty life, he believes that Jesus Christ has borne his sins in his own body, and that by his stripes he is healed. He looks forward to the dark valley, and the shadow of death, and believes that God will support and save him. He believes that he shall be admitted to mount

Zion, the city of the living God. He is admitted. Such is the efficacy of faith ; it saves the soul.

II. Faith in Jesus Christ enables the believer to resist temptation. In a world of temptation, where sin and ruin lurk in every path, how precious is the shield that repels the allurements of the world, the flesh, and the adversary!

See Joseph in Egypt. His master is abroad. The garden of voluptuous pleasure is open; the bower of secresy is formed. Youth and beauty unite, and urge him to seize the cup of delight, to riot in sensual pleasure. But he believes in God. He believes the promises, and the threatenings of God. Faith saves him from guilt and ruin.

David finds Saul, his enemy once and again, asleep, and defenceless. In a moment he might have slain him. The world would have justified him; the world would have praised and applauded him. He would have secured the royal treasures; he would have delivered himself from a murderous enemy; he would have secured the kingdom to himself. Who would not have given the fatal thrust to have freed himself from such malignant persecutions, to have secured such a mighty empire? Yet David, comforted and supported by faith in God, willingly suffers his enemy to escape unhurt.

Job, deprived of his children, robbed of his property, robbed of his reputation, instead of cursing God, says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Such is the power of faith to defend the soul against temptation.

III. Faith enables the believer to do what he would have thought impracticable or absurd. "I can do all things, cries faith, through Christ Jesus who strengtheneth me." "If I go through the water, it will not overflow me. If I go through the fire, it will not kindle upon me."

On the truth of God's word, Noah anticipated the deluge. He had no other evidence of such an event, nor was it so probable, as a thousand things which are daily disregarded. We have more evidence that it shall go well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, that the way of wisdom is pleasant, and the way of transgressors hard; yet how few believe, or are influenced by these truths.

But Noah believed, and therefore went to the forest, cut down the trees, collected and hewed the timber, and built a huge ship, probably on dry land. Had he not been impelled by faith, would he have done this?

Could Moses, could any man of a sound mind, not animated by faith, have led the unarmed mob of Israel from Egypt, pursued by the royal army? Could any mind, not transported by faith, have left the solid shore to tread the bottom of the miry deep? The army of the Midianites and the Amalekites was immense. Their camels were without number; yet Gideon with only three hundred men, attacked and drove them from the field. What but faith could rouse Deborah, a wise and peaceful woman, to lead the armies of Israel to battle, and to victory? Would any persons in their senses have entered on such expeditions, unless raised above mortal views, by that faith which is the evidence of things not seen? Faith of this sort has been

displayed by the pious in every age, from the beginning of the world to the present day. I will mention a single instance in comparatively modern times.

If we exclude faith from his character, the conduct of Martin Luther was folly and rashness in attempting the reformation of the papal church. While the laws of his country condemn him; while the spiritual tribunals, the most frightful of all tribunals, are preparing their racks and their fires; while the thunders of the Roman pontiff are bursting on his head, what has he to hope? Could any thing but that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, calm his fears, sustain his course, fire his zeal in view of judges, and princes, in view of torture and death? Faith changes rashness into prudence, presumption into wisdom. Faith elevates man above himself; the timid become bold; the feeble are made strong; the lukewarm are fired with a holy zeal.

IV. Faith may deliver the believer from the greatest evils, and procure the most valued blessings.

Believers often sigh and weep in a dungeon of despondency; because they are unconscious of the power to unlock their prison door. They forget the promise made to faith; they forget the sword of the Spirit. How many are bowed down under their burdens, unconscious of their spiritual strength to throw them off, unconscious of their power with God.

So Jacob mourned; "All these things are against me." So for a time, David mourned; "I shall one day fall by the hand of my enemy." So pious Christians, and faithful ministers often tremble at the sight of their enemies. Not so do they,—not so did David

always tremble. By degrees his faith rises, his hope becomes strong. Though he had been discouraged and perplexed; though he had been persecuted and hunted as a partridge in the woods of Judea,—a step between him and death,—his enemy ready to devour him—yet his faith triumphs. His light breaks forth, like the splendours of a morning sun, after a night of storm. He believes, though he does not know how, that God will destroy Saul. "As the Lord liveth," saith he, "the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish." He believes that somehow God will deliver him from his enemy.

Unless we ascribe this to faith, it was presumption, it was impiety; it was murder to foretell the death of his enemy. Such is the power of faith to repel the evils of life, when exerted by an injured, persecuted servant of God.

Now see its power in the soul of a sick and dying man. Hezekiah was sick unto death. His sentence is pronounced. Isaiah comes to him, and says, "Thus saith the Lord; Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." What could be more absolute, what more dreadful! Hezekiah was surprized and amazed. He was not yet satisfied with life; he was not convinced that the best time for his departure had come; he was not willing to die; he could not be willing. His mind rose; he exercised that triumphant faith which every good man may. "I beseech thee, oh Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." He could speak

no more, though his heart was yet full,—" and Hezekiah wept sore." What next? Before Isaiah was out of the house, he hears a voice, " Turn again, tell Hezekiah, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; I will heal thee;" thou shalt recover. Such is the power of faith on a sick bed. It wrests the prisoner from the king of terrours; delivers him from the agonies of dissolution, brings him back from the gates of death, saves him from the opening grave!

A law was made, signed and sealed, in Shushan, that all the Jews should be destroyed. It was a law of the Medes and Persians. It could not be altered. All the power of the empire was armed to execute the law. According to human calculations, not a ray of hope cheered the dreadful scene.

The faith of Mordecai is unshaken. In spite of laws, in spite of armies, he believes that Israel will be saved. He requests his kinswoman to devote three days to fasting and prayer. He assures her that if she neglects her duty, " Deliverance shall come from another quarter." His faith prevails; the church escapes the edge of the sword.

All the citizens of Nineveh with her royal court, might be summoned to the bar, to support the efficacy of faith. But I hasten down to the Gospel age, where nothing is found too hard for God,—where it is found that whatever men *believe*, that he performs for them. Matt. xv. Christ says to the Syrophenician woman, " Great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Dr. Clarke, remarking on this passage, says, "Persevering faith, and prayer are next to omnipotent. No person can thus pray and believe

without receiving all his soul requires." Mr. Henry says, "Be it unto thee—I can deny thee nothing; take what thou camest for. Great believers may have what they will for asking." The same doctrine is enforced Matt. viii, 13. "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Their faith is the exact measure of their blessing. What you believe you shall receive; it is precisely the thing which shall be given you. On this passage Mr. Henry remarks again. "Christ gave the centurion a blank. Be it done unto thee as thou believest. Yet what was said to him is now said to us." See here the power of faith; as Christ can do what he will, so an active believer may have what he will from Christ. You may enlarge their faith to any extent, all shall be given you. Accordingly a very learned commentator adds, "According to thy faith be it done unto thee, is a general rule of God's dealings with mankind. God is the same in present time as in ancient days, and miracles of healing may be wrought on our own bodies and souls, and on those of others by the instrumentality of faith. My friends, is not God the same? is not faith the same? is not Christ the same? is not the promise the same? I ask then, I anxiously ask, why the blessings of faith from Jesus Christ should not be the same? the same in all ages? You need not be apostles, you need not perform miracles. Bartimeus did not perform a miracle. He merely believed that Jesus Christ was able to open his eyes. Jesus Christ is now able, and you need do no more, than humble believers did under the Old and New Testament. They had faith in God and Christ, that they

were able to cure their leprosy, to heal their maladies, and that they should experience such favours. Therefore Christ did actually confer such favours. He is still the same, his promises are the same, and it is only for believers to be the same, and then the same blessings will follow from their faith.

Matt. xvii. The disciples inquire, "Why could not we cast him out?" Answer. "Because of your unbelief;" or, as it is in many manuscripts and versions, "because of the littleness of your faith." The disciples had saving faith; but they had not faith in this particular instance. Or it was weak and doubtful, owing, perhaps, to some peculiar malignity in the case. Such, doubtless, is the infelicity of thousands of saints. They have saving faith, but like Christian in the den of giant Despair, they have not faith to relieve themselves from temporary evils.

The doctrine of faith is repeated in language stronger than any which I have used, in Mark 9. "If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."

The man had said to Christ, "If thou canst," if thou art able "to do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Christ replies, The difficulty is not in my want of power. If there be any difficulty, it is your want of faith. If you can believe the fact, then all your desire shall be accomplished.

In perfect unison with this, Christ says to his disciples, "If you have faith and doubt not, ye shall say to this mountain, be thou removed and cast into the sea." Though this need not be understood literally, because it was a proverbial expression; still it signi-

fied the removal of the greatest evils of life. In this sense the Rabbis were termed "Rooters up of mountains;" that is, they could solve the most difficult questions. So faith, however small, like a grain of mustard seed, will conquer the greatest evils. Again, "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;" verily I say unto you ye shall have them.

But, perhaps, it may be inquired, "How shall we distinguish between things attainable, and things which are impossible? We can have no reasonable assurance, without a promise; but now we seldom or never have a promise, in any particular case." To this we need only one word of reply. A general promise is just as binding on the part of God, and gives as strong a claim on the part of the creature as a particular promise. "*Whatsoever* ye ask the Father in my name, he will do it for you," is a ground of as strong confidence, whatever be desired, as the particular promise, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." We rest on the general promise.

V. Faith displays her mysterious power in the support, the consolation, and triumph, which she affords believers in the unavoidable evils of human life.

Notwithstanding the commendations of faith, and her mighty power, it must be carefully remembered, that faith is always *reasonable;* its object must be consistent with the divine glory; and the general good. But often the removal of our evils hath no such tendency; but the general good, and even our personal welfare, on the whole, require our endurance

of the evil. A thousand cases might be described, where some thorn in the flesh is necessary for the individual, where some domestic trouble is salutary for the family, where some public calamity is useful to the nation. In such circumstances, it is not possible to exercise Gospel faith, for the removal of such evils. This concession does not weaken the power of faith; because no faith is ever exercised in such a case. Faith is not to be blamed for not being able to accomplish what she never attempts, and what she ought not to attempt.

In Egypt Joseph endured much evil; his father endured much evil from his absence; but all was meant for good. A faith which had opened the house of bondage, and hurried Joseph back to his father's bosom, would have been a rash, a baleful faith.

What then, after all, is the benefit of faith, if it will not remove all the evils of life? Much every way. Faith will, or may remove all the evils which ought to be removed. More than this, faith sustains the soul under those evils which are unavoidable, which are necessary, which are beneficial. Faith is not less glorious in the strength which she imparts, than in the deliverance which she brings. She is not less glorious in sustaining St. Paul under his perils and persecutions, than in leading St. Peter, at midnight, from his dungeon and his fetters.

Where is a sight more sublime, where a voice more celestial, than breaks from the lips of faith, touched with a coal from the holy altar? "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. I have

learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I glory in tribulation. I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die. I desire to depart to be with Christ." Such is the celestial power of faith.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We live in a day of weak faith. Men, by their faith, just save their souls. Hence the glory and invincible efficacy of faith are supposed to be limited to the apostolic age, or the first three hundred years of Christianity.

The propensity is universal among mankind, to accommodate the meaning of Scripture to their own experience. Every thing beyond their own views, is thought to be enthusiasm or extravagance. When people have only superficial convictions of sin, the doctrines of universal depravity, of regeneration, and future punishment are denied or explained away. Thus they perceive no necessity of atonement, and deny the divinity of the Saviour.

So is it with faith; men are weak in faith; hence they deny that such a powerful faith is exemplified, or required in the gospel.—Happily the oracles of God remain unaltered, and doubtless they will be more clearly understood, and the power of faith be again acknowledged, as the light of the millennial day advances. Then will men be strong in faith, and plead like Abraham, and prevail like Jacob, while wonders of grace will follow.

II. Saving faith is not inferiour to the faith of miracles. It may accomplish more; it works by love,

and purifies the heart, it saves the soul. It is therefore superiour to the faith of miracles. This may leave the heart destitute of every grace. Gospel faith sanctifies the heart, gives it a claim to eternal life; and produces all reasonable wonders and miracles. Faith is *rational:* its object is suitable and proper, and for the divine glory. As long as miracles had this character, they were produced by faith. When they became unnecessary, or unreasonable, they ceased; but whatever thing or event may now be reasonable, and for the divine glory, is still a proper object of faith, and may be produced by faith. Indeed, I do not believe, that any precise line can be drawn, between events deemed natural, and those which are supernatural. We do not by this mean that they can never be distinguished. When Lazarus rises from his grave, we are sure of a miracle. When Ahab is wounded in battle, we think only of a natural effect. Between these may be many cases of a doubtful nature. Was the recovery of Hezekiah, was the birth of Isaac, was the preservation of Daniel, natural or miraculous? You do not certainly know. Both classes of events are produced by the agency of God; both may be the effect of faith; the scriptures make no distinction; they unite and blend like the colours of the rainbow. How then shall they be distinguished?

By faith Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice. By faith Noah built an ark, and Abraham travelled to Canaan. These were natural actions. By faith Moses passed through the Red Sea, by faith the walls of Jericho fell. These were miraculous; but the Holy

Scriptures make no distinction, they are blended together in the same sentence. All are ascribed to faith, and to the same sort of faith; no distinction is made. The essence of faith is ever the same; it may be immensely varied in degree in different individuals, in different characters and ages of the world.

There may not be the same *reason* for wonderful events in every age; then, as faith is always rational, the same events will not be produced in every age. Still the nature of faith is unchangeable, and is probably producing more glorious effects in every age than the world believe or imagine. If we are straitened, if we are circumscribed to small things, we are not straitened in God, nor by the nature of faith; but by our unbelief, or the weakness of our faith.

Do any say, it is impossible that such great effects as those which have been mentioned, can result from faith. I only ask, what event is greater or more wonderful than the salvation of a lost sinner? the spiritual resurrection of souls dead in trespasses and sins? If God give this greater salvation to our faith, why then should it be thought a thing incredible, that faith should produce less wonderful effects?

II. The subject calls upon us, and encourages us to enlarge and strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ. Is not the world, and are not we, miserably deficient? Where is that unmixed confidence in God which his word justifies, which his word requires, which his word commands? Like the church at Sardis, have we not a name to live, while we are really dead? Like the church at Laodicea do we not imagine ourselves zealous, and rich in morals and missionary

sacrifices, while we are lukewarm? Where are those fruits of our faith which Noah, and Daniel, and Job received in handfuls?

Let us then fix our attention on what is most important, most desirable; let us dwell on the object, till we see all its excellencies; then let us believe, believe that God is able and willing to bestow this important and desirable object; ask him, believing that he will hear you, and the thing shall be accomplished. Like Solomon, ask for much, and more shall be given you. What a man soweth, that shall he reap.

Refuse nothing to Jesus Christ, and he will refuse nothing to you. Devote yourselves to God, and believe his promises; exercise the faith of patriarchs and apostles, and your rewards and consolations shall be as great as those of patriarchs and apostles, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, escaped the edge of the sword, received their dead raised to life again!

Faith is the gift of God. Will God give faith only to disappoint, to confound, and shame the believer? All great and mighty impulses of the mind, while founded in reason, are the gift of God. The ingenious skill of Bezaleel, and the daring enterprise of Cyrus, were the gift of God. Thence we see that the natural hope and confidence, or faith, of natural men, concerning worldly things are the gift of God.

These mighty affections of the heart are inspired by God, to produce great and lasting effects, in the divine government. Unless their legitimate and spontaneous effects be realized, these mighty powers are

useless and dangerous. A potent cause, not producing its effects, is an absurdity, and a reproach to its author. Such a solecism never does take place. Historic facts will show what wonderful effects have been produced by a mere natural or physical faith. Can we, then, too highly estimate the faith of the Gospel? Is a man disappointed in his reasonable arrangements and expectations? It is because he did not desire and believe with ardour. He was not animated with that love, which, sooner or later, grasps the object to which it aspires. Those who have faith in nothing, will achieve nothing. Feeble minds there are, who have no faith in themselves, in man, in God. But faith is power. Thirty-five thousand Greeks had confidence in their commander; and they followed Alexander to the conquest of the world. An oracle gave the universe to the Romans; the Romans believed the promise, and gained the empire of the universe. Columbus believed in the existence of a new world; and a new world rose from the bosom of the ocean before him. Shall we not then exalt our views of Christian faith? Shall we not say of all believers what St. Ambrose said of the martyrs, "Without armies, without legions, they vanquish tyrants, tame lions, take from fire its vehemeuce, and its edge from the sword." Shall we not then aspire to their faith? Is not the same faith required of us? Are not the same promises made to us? Shall we not soon, very soon, be in perishing need of the same faith?

Look then to the examples of Noah and others. Noah saw the storm gathering, the lightning blazing, and the hills trembling. The windows of heaven are

open, the waters overflow the earth, and the shrieks of a perishing world are lost in the howlings of the storm. Yet, supported by the power of faith, Noah rides the billows of the world. Calmly he surveys the wreck of human glory; his faith supports him till he rests on Ararat, and kindles the sacrifice on the holy altar.

Do you not, my dear friends, need the faith of Noah? A more, yes, a more terrible scene lies before you. You need, if possible, a more powerful faith. You will soon see the dead rising, and the Son of man coming to take vengeance on the wicked. Are you prepared to meet your Judge. Have you faith to see, unmoved, the heavens pass away with a great noise? Should you this moment hear the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God; should you now be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, could your heart endure, or your hand be strong? These very things are at the door. Remember how precious is faith in Jesus Christ. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.

SERMON VII.

ISAIAH xlv, 11.

Command ye me.

In every book which we read, we anticipate pleasure and instruction corresponding with the character of the author. We expect piety in Watts, sublimity in Milton, harmony in Pope, profound thoughts and strong arguments in Edwards, strains of eloquence in Saurin and Massilon.

The God of heaven has condescended to be an author, and we are not disappointed. We find a work like himself, sublime and incomprehensible. He has published a system of Theology, containing doctrines more wonderful than the heart of man had ever conceived, enjoining duties which philosophy had never acknowledged, proclaiming promises more glorious, than human hopes had ever expected, and threatenings more dreadful than mortal fears had ever imagined. In every part of the work we discover the strokes of the great Master. As the sun, shining in his strength, surpasses the light of the comet, roving in darkness; so the instructions of the Bible are more excellent

than the writings of men. The proud speculations of human sagacity are humbled; the eye of worldly wisdom is dazzled and confounded.

An example is presented in the text. The importance, the efficacy, and irresistible success of prayer, is announced in a manner to surprise and astonish the reader. The fact hardly gains our belief, though it is declared in the plainest manner, and in other parts of Scripture repeated in various forms.

The pagan philosophers had doubted whether prayer was any advantage, whether prayer was a duty. The text does not merely settle these questions, but asserts the mighty power, the certain success of prayer, gives it the force of a "command." "The meaning," saith the pious Flavel, "is, that God hath, as it were, subjected the works of his hand to the prayer of his saints. And it is as if he had said, If my glory, if your necessity require it, do but ask me in prayer, and whatever my Almighty power can do, I will do for you."

The following paraphrase is from the learned Dr. Lowth. "Thus saith the Holy One of Israel and his Maker, which generally ushers in a glorious promise, instead of murmuring, humble yourselves, and ask what you will, for the consolation of my children, and ye shall be sure of it, as ye are of those things which are at your command. Although God is not obliged to render an account of his proceedings, yet he is graciously pleased to resolve any questions that are proposed to him, concerning the issue of his peoples' captivity. Nay, he represents himself, as ready to serve, and to do every thing which can be desired

in favour of his elect, those whom he calls his sons, and the works of his hands." Command ye me.

Doctrine. Certain prayers God will answer in the most literal manner.

This doctrine does not contradict a common opinion that the prayer of faith will obtain the thing asked, or something which is better; but proceeds further, and asserts that we may by prayer obtain the very thing which is desired. But perhaps it may be proper to remove some apparent difficulties.

It is said Jer. xv. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be towards this people." This shows, perhaps, no more than that the usual and common prayers of Moses and Samuel would not save that wicked people. Remarkable evils require remarkable means to remove them. The doctrine does not assert that the common prayers of faith will obtain the object which is desired. But I may also remark that neither Moses, nor Samuel, nor even Jeremiah, did pray for that people; for God had said to him, "Pray not for this people."

Possibly, it may be objected to this opinion, that it is new. This, I do not think, is perfectly just. If you read the addresses made to the benevolent corporations of the day, many of them assert my doctrine. If you read the divines of the present or past ages, though I do not say, that they systematically support this opinion, yet I do say that often they do assert the same doctrine. I will give a single instance from Dr. John Edwards, whom Dr. Kippis calls the St. Paul and Augustine of his age. "Prayer mightily prevails with God, and, if I may so speak with reverence,

forces and extorts mercy from him. One said of Luther, who was wonderfully prevalent in prayer, 'That man could do what he would.' It is true, in its proportion, of every pious and godly supplicant; he can do as he pleases; he can wrestle with omnipotence and overcome. He can besiege heaven, and take it by violence." But were the opinion novel, this would not prove it false. The time has been when every thing was new. So lately as the 17th century Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition, as an obstinate heretic, because he believed that the earth and planets revolved in their orbits. He was compelled to retract this heresy, and as a further punishment, after a long imprisonment, was required to repeat the seven penitential Psalms every week.

It will probably be said by some, that the translators of our Bible have not done justice to the text; that instead of standing as it does, it should be in the form of a question, Command ye me? This is entirely a matter of opinion, and who shall decide where learned men disagree? Dr. Lowth, whose name outweighs a host of ordinary commentators, approves our common translation. Yet I feel no particular interest in defending the translation of our Bible in this passage. I have placed it merely as a motto to this discourse, and do not intend to use it as a proof text; others, as I think, are abundantly numerous.

It will possibly be said, that pious professors have not found the doctrine true, and that they lightly esteem such an opinion. To this I can only reply, that some professors, through a long life, have found the

doctrine true; in the hour of danger and distress, it has been their strongest support; the sweetest cordial in the cup of life; the richest jewel of all their treasures.

It may be objected that Paul prayed, that "the thorn in the flesh might be removed," and Moses "that he might enter Canaan;" and that both were denied. To this I only say, that no evidence shows that their prayers answered the description which I am about to give of those prayers which are universally successful. What then is the distinctive character of such prayers?

I. To be sure of success, the supplicant must have a clear persuasion that the thing for which he prays is for the divine glory.

Here is firm ground. Having this argument, we have power with God. We are stronger than Sampson, more successful than David. This is the consideration, which moves the divine mind; for which worlds roll from his hand, and men and angels bow before his throne. All the works of God are to promote his own glory. This was the object when he created the world, and furnished it with conveniences for the comfort of man. All things were created by him and for him. For his glory he kindled the light of the sun, balanced the stars, bid the mountains rise, the ocean roll, and Eden bloom. For the same great purpose, he governs the nations, and their successive monarchies rise and fall. For this purpose the Saviour was promised, was born, and made a sacrifice for sin. For this great object, the glory of God, the inspiration of the Almighty has in this age, excited "many

to run to and fro," the world is moved, knowledge is increasing, the influence of the Gospel is advancing, the lights of Christianity are kindling, soon to shine and enlighten all the coasts of the world. For this the Holy Spirit operates, the minds of men are sanctified, converts are multiplied, and the songs of the redeemed are heard from mount Zion, to the ends of the earth. He whose mind contemplates this sublime object, which has interested the heart of Deity from everlasting, kindling with sacred delight on discovering some event which will advance this object, may offer his prayers with assurance of success. True, there is a physical possibility he may mistake; but, having a sound judgment, a pure conscience, and a good heart, he may have a *moral* certainty of being right. Especially, if in addition to his clear conviction of the fact, he enjoys a spirit of prayer for the object, he may be assured he is not wrong. "The Spirit helps our infirmities," and though we may not absolutely know what we should pray for as we ought, yet the Spirit will make intercession for us. "He will lend us his helping hand, and manage these affairs for us, guiding our minds to suitable petitions; so that we shall pray as we ought, for what is good and acceptable. This the Scripture teaches. Then, we may indulge the sacred ardour of our hearts; we may pour out our souls, day and night; we may refuse to be denied. Doing the work of God, guided by the Spirit of God, we cannot be disappointed. Desires produced by the Spirit of God, directed to the glory of God, cannot be lost; they must succeed.

Here it may be remarked, that this persuasion cannot always be felt in view of things very desirable. Sometimes the man under sore trials is satisfied, that his troubles are for his best good, and for the divine glory. He surely cannot pray in the manner we are describing, for the removal of such evils. Often, where such a clear discovery is not made, the man may be wholly uncertain whether his affliction may not be for the glory of God. For the removal of such evils he cannot pray with assured success. Often it would puzzle a man's self-love to show that his being rich would honour God more than his poverty. How would it conduce to the general good, if his neighbour's wealth were transferred to him? Where is the evidence that the divine glory will be promoted if his sick child recover, if his dissolute child be reformed, if he himself be a monument of mercy, rather than of justice? Yet, sometimes these, and many other things, may be so presented to the mind, that the divine honour seems deeply involved. Irresistible evidence of this fastens on the mind, while some kind promise occurs, which is received with confidence; then may we pray with assurance of hope. Some things may often appear in this light, as the influence of the Holy Spirit, the success of the Gospel, the salvation of men. When such a conviction, in view of any event, has fastened on the mind; when we have a clear persuasion that the object will promote the divine glory; then may we bend the knee, and spread forth the hand, and raise the strong, fervent cry of supplication. Then may we repeat and persevere in our supplications; so believing we ought

to persevere. We shall prevail. The Psalmist understood the efficacy of this argument. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." "For the sake of thy name and glory, pardon my sin." His sin was pardoned. His second argument is allied to this. "Pardon my sin," not because it is small, but because it is great; I cannot make atonement, I am lost without pardoning mercy; nor is this all; the greater the sin, the more will the honour of divine mercy be magnified in its forgiveness. It is the glory of the great God, to forgive great sins, to forgive all iniquity, transgression and sin.

Joshua understood the power of this argument. Israel was smitten, and fled before their enemies. Joshua perceived that the divine honour was involved in this state of things, that this evil must be retrieved, or reproach would be cast on the name of God. "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord." He cried, "O Lord God, O Lord, what shall we say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies, and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" This argument, "the great name," the honour of Jehovah, is irresistible. God immediately answers this devout leader of Israel, directs him how to proceed, and soon leads him on to victory and conquest.

Moses once and again enjoyed the happy answers of this effectual mode of supplication. The people of Israel had rebelled, were about choosing a leader that they might return to Egypt. In this distress, while the people were ready to stone him, Moses flies to the throne of mercy, and cries, "If thou shalt

kill this people, then the nations will speak saying, "The Lord was not able to bring this people into the land, which he sware unto them." 'Reproach and dishonour will be reflected on the glory of thy name; secure thy glory; pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people.' Like a prince he has prevailed with God. "The Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word; but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." 'I yield to your argument; my providence shall suffer no reproach; the fame of my wonders shall travel through the world.' Such is the certain effect of prayer, when the mind discovers the divine glory to be concerned; when the heart duly pleads and urges this argument. Then does God say, "Ask, and ye shall receive; command ye me."

II. To be sure of success, the man of prayer must not only have a true, evangelical faith, but an appropriate, particular faith.

That faith in Scripture is a generic term including different species needs no proof. From not keeping this circumstance in view, much perplexity has risen. Men have disputed, and denied or claimed that efficacy for one species of faith, which is promised only to another. Scripture speaks of the belief or faith of devils. The apostles had the faith of miracles; all sincere christians have evangelical faith; Sampson had a *particular* faith, that he could pull down the temple of Dagon, and Elijah that an abundance of rain was coming. The prayers of evangelical faith may or may not be literally answered. They often are, and often are not. When they are not, something

better may be supposed. The "grace sufficient" for Paul was better than a removal of "the thorn." The prayer of *appropriate* faith ensures its object. I need not analyse the evidence of this particular belief, to answer cavils and quibbles. When a fact can be proved, objections are futile. But I may say, generally, that some intense, invincible impulse on the mind is experienced, or some promise is believed; and I ask, what danger or distress do men ever endure, to which some promise may not be applied? Promises do not leave the result contingent, or merely probable, but absolutely certain, when the condition is observed. Who then may not exercise this faith? Christians speak freely of pleading the divine promises; and they often speak as they do of their neighbour's promise, which merely renders the favour hopeful or probable. Not such are the promises of God. They are yea and amen, absolutely certain. To plead the promises of God is either proper or improper. If it be improper, let the phrase be blotted from the dialect of religion, and the duty never again attempted. If it be proper, then let men plead the promises with sincerity, with confidence, and assurance of success. Still I would not too sanguinely determine with precision, how far this faith is a duty, or only a privilege. Possibly it is a privilege seldom or never granted to some Christians, and not always, to any.

The following observations from an eminently pious divine* seem to corroborate my opinions; they breathe the air of experience, and intimate knowledge

* Dr. Cotton Mather.

of the subject. He says, that "Good men, who labour and abound in prayer to the great God, sometimes arrive to the assurance of a *particular faith*, for the good success of their prayer. 'Tis not a thing that never happens, that the children of God in the midst of their supplications for this or that particular mercy, find their hearts very comfortably, but unaccountably, carried forth to a strange persuasion, that they shall receive this particular mercy from the Lord; and this persuasion is not a mere notion and fancy, but a special impression from heaven upon the minds of the saints that are made partakers of it. This particular faith is not the attainment of every Christian, much less an endowment of every prayer. There is no real Christian, but what prays in faith. His prayer hath a general faith in the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God, and the mediation of Christ. But there is many a real Christian who is a stranger to the meaning of this thing, viz. a particular faith for such mercies, without which a man may get safe to heaven at the last. It is here and there a Christian, whom the sovereign grace of heaven does favour with the consolations of a particular faith; nor if a Christian taste of these joys, may he expect more than a taste of them; they are dainties that are not every day to be feasted on: it is not in every prayer that the King of heaven will admit every one to so much of intimacy with himself. Indeed, such a particular faith is not so much the duty of a Christian, as his comfort, his honour, his privilege. There is a *praying in faith* incumbent on every Christian in every prayer; but this

particular faith for the bestowal of such and such desired mercies, is not incumbent on a Christian: it is not required of him. It is a vast privilege for a Christian to be assured that the Lord will do this or that individual thing for him; however, it is no sin for a Christian to break off not assured of it. But it is the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, that with a singular operation, does produce in a Christian this particular faith; which, indeed is near a kin to the faith of miracles. The wondrous meltings, the mighty wrestlings, the quiet waitings, and the holy resolves, that are characters of a particular faith, which is no delusion, are the works of the Holy Spirit." Such were the views of this pious and learned divine.

Without saving faith, it is impossible to please God. The faith of Abraham and Jacob rendered them the friends of God, and gave such success to their prayers. While we are unbelieving, or regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. The prayers of impenitence are "abominable" in the sight of God. It was the prayer of *faith* which produced those immense blessings recorded in the book of God. The prayer of faith opened the windows of heaven, shut the mouths of lions, subdued enemies, healed the sick, raised the dead.

But for assured success in prayer, again I say, somewhat more than mere saving faith is necessary. He who so prays, must believe that God is a rewarder of those, who diligently seek him. His faith must be appropriate to the object which he seeks; he must take hold of a promise, and apply it to the blessing for

which he prays; or feel an intensity of desire associated with the divine glory, which brooks no denial. Noah not only believed to his salvation, but he believed that God would keep him amid the tempests of a drowning world. Abraham not only had the faith of eternal life, but he had an appropriate faith, when he stood by the altar, with the knife in his hand, that somehow, God would make the seed of Isaac numerous as the stars of heaven. Jacob, while he makes supplication, and dedicates a tenth of his substance to God, has not only the faith of God's elect; but he believes that God will "keep him in the way that he goes, give him bread to eat, and raiment to put on.

To be sure of success in prayer, it is not sufficient merely to exercise evángelical faith. A man may have faith for the salvation of his soul, and yet have no faith as to some particular favours which he desires. This probably is the reason that good men suffer so much, and enjoy so little. As to these things they are weak as other men; they have no faith. In such case their saving faith gives no security of obtaining these favours of providence, their faith does not extend to them; how can it have any influence in securing them? Peter had faith that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer of his soul; but when he felt the winds blowing, and the sea rolling, he had not faith that Jesus Christ would enable him to walk on the angry sea. But when two blind men cry, "Son of David have mercy on us," Jesus says to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do *this?*" They must have a particular faith for the particular favour

which they ask. They had this faith, and their eyes were opened. Does an afflicted father bring his son oppressed with a dumb spirit, foaming and gnashing with his teeth? Jesus saith unto him, "If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him who believeth." The father was not required to perform miracles, nor to exercise the faith of miracles. He was required only to believe, that Jesus Christ could perform miracles, or this miracle in particular. With tears the father cried, "Lord, I believe." His son was healed.

Again, the Saviour says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." 'Believe that I am faithful to my promise, that I do hear prayer, and your prayer shall be answered.' Thus a particular faith is necessary to ensure a particular favour. When you so offer up your supplications, God says "Command ye me." If this proof be not full and complete, the Father of the faithful offers himself as the last witness to be admitted. When God appeared to judge and punish Sodom, Abraham drew near in the confidence of his heart, and with strong expressions of faith in the righteousness of God, offers his intercessions. He believes that the Judge of all the earth will do right in this particular instance, and not destroy the righteous with the wicked. As we ought to expect in such cases, his first, and second, and third, and fourth, and fifth petition is granted; all are granted; had there been more petitions, no doubt they would have been granted. The oil of mercy ceases to flow, not because the fountain is exhausted; but the vessel receiving it is full. God continues to grant,

as long as Abraham continues to pray. The cause of Sodom is lost, not because her Judge is inexorable, nor because he is weary of hearing the pleadings of her advocate; but his faith has reached its limits, he can say no more. While he prays, he receives all he asks; his faith fails, and Sodom is destroyed. May I not again say such prayers are effectual; to such supplicants God says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." But the faith must be appropriate and particular. A want of discrimination here has been the source of mistake and wrong opinions. The faith of miracles, and saving or evangelical faith, are supposed to include all faith. But to confute this notion, I further ask, What was the faith of Jonathan, that he and his armour-bearer could vanquish a garrison of Philistines? What was the faith of Nehemiah, that the "God of heaven" would prosper him in building Jerusalem? What was the faith of Ezra, when he said to the king "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him," refusing to ask the protection of a band of soldiers? Here were no miracles, of course no faith of miracles; neither was it mere saving faith. In fact, what was the faith of all those persons, for whom miracles were performed, the widow of Sarepta, the lame, and the blind? They performed no miracles; they therefore had not the faith of miracles; neither was it merely evangelical faith: but an exercise of the heart entirely distinct; it was a particular, appropriate faith. St. Peter's saving faith was not destroyed nor weakened, though his appropriate and particular faith failed, walking on the sea. Yes; all these and many more

had the appropriate, particular faith for which I am pleading. In the exercise of this faith, they raised their hands and their hearts to heaven; they were heard and answered, as such supplicants ever are.

III. To ensure success we ought to feel a humble, pious resolution *never to give over* our supplications, while there is a possibility of obtaining the object.

In the neutral, indifferent prayers, which, alas, we fear, are too common, men are soon weary and faint, they become inconstant, and forget their object. Like the king of Israel, who smote the ground thrice, and then stayed, which provoked the wrath of the prophet, they pray thrice, or a few times, and think this to be sufficient. But had he smitten the ground perseveringly "five or six times," he would have obtained his desire, he would have consumed his enemies; so, would men persevere in their petitions, they would be answered.

In the prayers also, which arise from a spirit of self-righteousness, or reliance on our own strength, if the blessing does not soon arrive, we are too apt to feel disappointed, to be hurt, and grieved, and discouraged, and cease to pray. But even when prayer is offered in a better temper, we may fail from the imbecility of our purposes, or from discouragement in view of difficulties, which are putting the object further and further from our reach, or from utter despair, rising from some unexpected frown of providence, rendering our prospect more and more dismal. Our confidence, and faith and hope are weakened; our prayers lose their fervency; they become inconstant; the object recedes from our view; or is mingled with

others of a general character, of only ordinary interest, which make only a slight impression on the heart. Prayers made in these circumstances afford no promise of success.

But sometimes, as new trials rise, as new dangers alarm the mind, the pious suppliant offers his petitions with increasing constancy and perseverance. Like blind Bartimeus, as difficulties are thrown in the way, he cries "a great deal the more, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, and answer this prayer, which I offer."

Sometimes an object appears so desirable, so important, so necessary, that the idea of losing it is insupportable. In such a time, the heart often cleaves to the throne of grace, as the vine twines itself round the tree on which it grows. If you tear it away, you rend it in pieces. With such a temper Moses prayed for the deliverance of Israel in the wilderness. God has pronounced their sentence, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Was ever destruction more sure? But Moses will not let God alone, and see him destroy his dear people. He will not consent, that his family shall not be made a great nation. No. He resolves not to despair, not to give up his hope and faith, not to leave off his intercession, while any possibility of success remains. He therefore repeated his petitions, continued his supplications, till he secured his object, till "the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

Was not the prayer of Elijah for rain after a long and terrible famine of a similar character? He

ascends to the top of mount Carmel, he sits down with his face between his knees, as though he was resolved not to rise, till his prayer was answered. Accordingly, soon was heard the sound of an abundant rain.

In the story of the unjust judge, Jesus Christ has taught us the certain success of invincible perseverance in prayer. The judge neither feared God, nor regarded man; yet because the widow troubled him, and wearied him, by her *continual* coming, he says, "I will avenge her," or do her justice. I will grant her request, lest she "stun"* me. So will God do justice to those who persevere in their supplications; he will answer his elect who cry day and night, and as it were, "weary and trouble him" with their continual prayers. He will answer those, who resolve to continue their petitions.

The same doctrine is enforced in the history of the man, who at midnight went to borrow three loaves of bread. A very unpromising time to ask a favour, nor would he then have applied to his surly neighbour, had he not been a good and hospitable soul himself. His benevolence gave him zeal and courage. As probably he expected, his neighbour answered him roughly, refused to give him admittance, and virtually bid him be gone. "Trouble me not—the door is shut—my children are with me—I cannot rise—I will not." So the business seems to be closed, and no hope is left. Yet we read, that by the perseverance, by the unyielding importunity of the borrower, his drowsy neighbour is persuaded to rise from his bed, to open his door, and give him as much bread as he desires.

* Dr. Doddridge.

It is worthy of notice, that the Greek word translated "importunity" may signify *impudence*, and is so translated by learned critics. It is compounded of two words which signify *destitute of modesty*. It is applied to beggars, who press their petitions, and will take no denial.

To show that this is neither new nor rash, I quote Dr. Edwards of England, who more than a century ago, said, "Pray with constancy and perseverance." That humility, which inspires the Christian soul, bids him imitate the woman of Canaan, who would not be denied. Our Saviour taught his disciples to persevere in prayer, by a parable of one who went to his friend by night to borrow some necessaries of him, and procured them of him merely by his importunity; because of his *impudence;* so in strictness it ought to be rendered. This answers to what we read in the Talmud. "Impudence toward God is beneficial. There is, if I may so speak, and I may, because the original authorizes me, an allowable sort of impudence, such as makes the faithful persevere in their requests to God, and remain undaunted in their petitions." No candid mind can mistake this language; although strong and bold, it is much like that of the Apostle, Heb. iv. 16. "Let us therefore, come *boldly* to the throne of grace." I find I have spoken in unison with another celebrated divine, Dr. Barrow, who says that in "certain cases we should be eager and hot, resolute and stiff, free and bold; yea, in a manner, peremptory and insolent solicitors with God. So our Saviour intimateth, when comparing the manner of God's proceeding with that of men, he

representeth one friend yielding needful succour to another, not barely upon the score of friendship; but for his impudence, that is, for his confident and continued urgency, admitting no refusal or excuse. So doth God, in such cases, allow and oblige us to deal with him, being instant and pertinacious in our requests; giving him no rest; not enduring to be put off, nor brooking any repulse; never being discouraged nor cast into despair by any delay or semblance of neglect. We may wrestle with God like Jacob, and with Jacob may say, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Thus God suffereth himself to be prevailed upon, and is willingly overcome. Thus omnipotence may be mastered, and a happy victory may be gained over invincibility itself. Heaven may sometimes be forced by storm, or by the assaults of extremely fervent prayer; it will assuredly yield to a long seige. God will not ever hold out against the attempts of an obstinate suppliant."

More than a thousand years before this, St. Gregory had said, "For God will, by a certain importunity, be entreated, he will be compelled, he will be conquered."*

Indeed, what was the instruction, the lesson, designed by Jesus Christ in his beautiful apologue of the man borrowing bread at midnight? What was the inference, what else could be the inference or moral, but that which he himself drew, and which I have drawn from this little history? Unquestionably this is the inference; therefore, "I say unto you, *Ask*.

* Vult enim Deus rogari, vult cogi, vult quadam importunitate, vinci.

and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." This is precisely the doctrine which I am urging, the inference which I have made. Here again I am supported by another ancient divine, who says, "Whosoever asks in full faith, and seeks with great diligence, and knocks with constant perseverance, *shall* obtain the thing which he wishes."* Another writer says, "These three, asking, seeking, knocking, must be joined to obtain our desires." On this passage another commentator† says, "The precept is, perseverance and importunity in prayer; the promise is, audience and acceptance. If we do not immediately receive what we ask, we must continue to seek and knock. Though prayer be not always answered in our time, it shall never fail of being answered in God's time." Surely, this parable gives a clear right and authority to indulge all the holy, importunate perseverance of the soul, and to pray, and pray, and pray, till the blessing is granted.

If it be not the design of these two beautiful parables to teach the very doctrine, which I am urging, I am utterly at a loss what can be their design, or to perceive any useful meaning. Why are the judge and neighbour represented as unyielding, and not disposed, immediately, to grant the requests made to them, unless it be to show, that men ought always to pray, to pray without ceasing day and night? Indeed we are not left to conjecture on this point. The Evangelist, as if anticipating the doubts of men, concerning this doctrine, makes a formal introduction to

* Menochius. † Burket.

this parable, and tells us explicitly, in a plainness of style, which ought not to be misunderstood, that Jesus Christ "spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Or, according to a later translation, "Then he addressed them with a parable, to show them that they ought to persevere in prayer, and not be discouraged." Here then we are on a sure rock; the Evangelist has told us the design of the Saviour; it was to recommend this perseverance in prayer, which I am urging. But why are the defenceless widow, and the poor man, destitute of bread, made so triumphantly successful? The answer is certain, for it is a part of the parable. "Hear what the unjust judge saith, I will avenge her, and shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them;" their prayers, so offered, must and will be answered. God has pledged his veracity not to reject such requests.

As Jesus Christ approached the limits of his mission, near Tyre and Sidon, a pagan woman met him, and cried—observe the ardour of her mind—"She cried." She did not from false modesty, or the fear of man, whisper her desires, or speak in a moderate manner. She cried, "Have mercy on me, oh Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Her prayer was affecting and sincere, it was respectful, and ardent, and believing; yet Jesus Christ took no notice of her, "he answered her not a word." Probably he did not look on her, nor seem to hear her. Still she continues her supplications. The disciples were offended at her freedom, her boldness, her appa-

rent impudence. They beg Christ to send her away, as a troublesome intruder. He replies, "I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; this woman is a heathen; I shall hold no discourse with her, not so much as to send her away." She hears all; her heart is breaking; she finds no encouragement for her suffering daughter. Was ever a kind mother in a more afflicting condition? Still, once more she ventures; she presses a little nearer; she cries again, "Lord, help me; help a distressed widow, mother, and child." Never was the mild Saviour so severe to a devout applicant. For once, the gentle Saviour spoke harshly to this helpless, weeping mother. "It is not fit," said he, "to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs," 'as you heathen are.' What hope is left? The merciful Saviour rejects prayer; he seems to reproach one kneeling before him. Yet she perseveres. In the agony of her soul, in the border of despair, she once more cries, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." 'I do not ask the bread of the children's table; I only ask the crumbs which they can spare, and you can give.' She has conquered, the Saviour is overcome; he replies, "Oh woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." He signs a blank; she may fill it as she pleases. She has her desire. Her faith is like a swollen river, stopped in its course by some casual obstruction. The longer it stops, the higher it rises, only to sweep all before it, with a more irresistible impetuosity. Her faith triumphs; she is a notable witness to support the doctrine, that such believing, persevering prayers will

be crowned with success. When oppressed with wants, when borne down with afflictions, I open the volume of life, and turn to the promises, my heart is gladdened, I hear the voice of a kind Father, and I hear him say, "With the merciful I will show myself merciful. Ask, and ye shall receive deliverance." I believe, and I plead, and continue my importunity till the answer is given. A general promise is just as available as the most particular.

This persevering, invincible importunity manifests itself in the constancy of its supplications. It is not confined to times nor places, but is habitual and untired; as Nehemiah declared, that he prayed "day and night." Jacob prayed on his journey; alone and defenceless, he found God present in a desert, as well as at the tabernacle. While in company at Shiloh, Hannah prayed and made earnest supplication to her God. Though she is at the place of public worship, she does not wait in listless indolence for Eli, the minister of religion, to lead the devotions, neither does she disturb others. She was in bitterness of heart, and therefore she prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. Now Hannah spake in her heart; her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Of this kind was the prayer of the Psalmist. He says, "When I awake, I am still with thee." 'When I fell asleep, my heart was with thee, ascending in prayer. The last thought which I recollect was a devout aspiration. As I awake, my heart is still the same, cleaving to its object, and ascending in fervent prayer.'

To be sure of success we must not give over or suspend our prayers; our hearts must burn with that

holy zeal, which waits not for the stated hours of devotion, for family or formal prayer; but in the house and on the road, in the field and the shop, raises the soul to heaven.

IV. Our prayers, to be certainly successful, must be offered with fervour, or glowing zeal.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by *force*." Or according to a more modern rendering of this passage, "The kingdom of heaven is entered by force, and the violent seize it greedily."* In any form it justifies the utmost violence of sacred devotion. It does more; it implies the certain success of such devotion. It is the *fervent* prayer of the righteous man which avails much, which is effectual. Jacob did not content himself with merely asking, that he and his dear family might be delivered from Esau and his four hundred warriours. No. He rose high in his address. He importuned, he insisted, he demanded, he would not be denied. "I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me;" 'unless thou give some assurance of escape from danger.' Was this privilege peculiar to Jacob? May not we say to God, we will not suspend our prayers till the desire of our heart is granted? Does not God say, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it?" 'Enlarge your desires, ask for the most valuable blessings, and you shall not be disappointed.' God is as willing to give great favours, as small ones. He says to his people, Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all the heart." Does not the Church say, "I found him whom my soul loveth, the

* Wakefield.

Saviour, I held him, and would not let him go?" Such is the zeal of believers, sometimes, that they will not leave the throne of mercy, till they obtain their request. They ask, God listens; they repeat and press their request; he yields.

This strong degree of fervour may, and often ought to be indulged. This is one of the essential circumstances of assured success. So far from being offensive, it is often highly acceptable to God. He sometimes waits to discover this disposition, before he grants the request. He not only allows a holy importunity of soul, and is pleased when we repeat our petitions, and pour forth the sacred eloquence of the heart; but often awakens and excites those stronger, overwhelming feelings which are inexpressible. The Holy Spirit produces those mighty desires, which are manifested by groanings, which cannot be uttered; those intense affections which cannot be expressed in formal language; those exquisite thoughts which break forth only in sighs and groans. Neither need we in such case lament the want of powerful words. He, who searcheth the heart, knows the mind and intent of the spirit, in exciting those unutterable desires, which will produce a favourable return.

V. The effectual prayer must be accompanied with the faithful use of all other means, for the attainment of the object.

This is so evident, as not to merit particular notice, were it not that men are prone to extremes. After all the power ascribed to prayer, it does not operate as a charm. It has no native strength, no executive force or efficacy. More generally it only secures the

blessing of God on other means, than is itself the direct cause of any effect. It does not supersede labour, but obtains the blessing of heaven on your labours. It does not supersede study, but procures a blessing on your studies. Let no man, therefore, feel sure of any blessing which he asks of God, unless he use all other means in his power. Moses, and Daniel, and Jacob, used other means, as well as prayer, to secure their object. Is health sought? All the prayers of the sanctuary may not save you, if you neglect other suitable remedies. Do you seek property? Diligence and economy are essential. Do you pray for holiness? Then other means of grace must be attended. Jesus Christ calls Lazarus from his dismal tomb; but this prisoner of death does not move, till the stone is rolled away. Noah escapes the deluge, but he must use other means beside prayer. He must build a spacious ark. The church of Christ prays for salvation; but she builds a house for God; she attends public worship; she supports the Gospel. Vows are another mean. Where these in Scripture accompany prayer, the prayer is effectual. By vows, I mean promises to devote something valuable to the service of God, if he shall grant a particular request. Jacob promised to God, that if he would give him bread to eat, and keep him in safety, he would give a tenth of his property to his service. God did supply and protect him. The Israelites vowed to God, that if he would deliver their enemies into their hands, they would destroy their cities. God did give them victory. Hannah vowed to give her child unto the Lord, if he would make her a mother. God did

make her a mother. To such prayers, God says, "Ask, and ye shall receive."

On reviewing the subject, many reflections occur, which I think might be enforced and illustrated with profit; but the time requires me to mention only a few, in a brief manner.

I. The subject clearly shows us why God sometimes prevents or withholds a spirit of prayer, and sometimes has forbidden prayer, when it would contravene his purposes.

When God has determined to inflict a certain evil on men, he devises some method in the course of Providence to prevent the importunate supplications of his friends. He had determined that it should not rain on the land of Israel for three years and six months. He therefore directed Elijah to leave the country, to conceal himself in retirement, that his eyes might not affect his heart, that he might not be excited to pray for the people, or to stir up their hearts to cry for relief. But when the time had expired, when God was about to refresh the land and relieve the people from their sufferings, by the plentiful showers of heaven; then, and not before, he commands Elijah to go and show himself to Ahab,* to survey the miseries which the dreadful famine has produced, that he might be moved to cry mightily for their removal. God is resolved not to shorten the calamity; yet he would not have his servant address his ardent prayers to be denied; he sends him away from the heart-moving scene, that his intense devotion

* See Henry and Scott.

may not be excited. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one promise made to prayer shall fail.

When God has determined to accomplish any object, whether it be the punishment of an individual or nation; when the decree is unconditional, and irreversible, he will turn away the attention of his people by some providential event, or even forbid their supplications. They might and probably would offer those believing, fervent, persevering prayers, which must be answered; but this would involve divine operations in an impossible dilemma. The decree must be executed; the prayer must be answered; but this is not possible. The only preventive is to withhold the spirit of grace and supplication, or to forbid prayer. Accordingly, is it not a general opinion, that sometimes the best men have not a spirit of fervent prayer in view of events, most interesting and important? But why should God withhold the spirit of devotion from Elijah, or forbid the prayer of Jeremiah, unless he has engaged to give a favourable answer? Therefore, God did forbid Jeremiah to pray for his people. "Pray not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them; neither make intercession to me." In three chapters, this interdiction is repeated. "Pray not;" "pray not;" "pray not for this people." If they burn his sermons, God will silence his effectual prayers. Their destruction was certain; the favourable answer to his prayers was as certain; therefore the prayers must be forbidden. But, if divine faithfulness was not pledged to grant a favourable answer, *why* should they be forbidden? Merely to save Jeremiah the trouble of praying? It was de-

priving him of a pleasure, rather than relieving him of a painful task. Was it not to secure the divine faithfulness from reproach, and *not* to save the prophet from useless labour. So, when God determined, that the sin against the Holy Ghost should not be forgiven in this life, or that which is to come, he gives it as a general precept, "I do not say you shall pray for it;" "With respect to this, I do not say that he should make petition."* Why, why should not prayer be offered for such a sinner, unless some promise is made to prayer?

In perfect uniformity, as I think, with this view of the subject, God says to Moses, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." 'Suspend your supplications; let me no more hear your fervent intercessions, be silent; for it will be impossible to execute my purposes of wrath on this wicked people, while your prayers arise with such holy importunity. Such petitions I have promised to answer. Leave my presence; let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot.' Had Moses yielded and been silent, no doubt, Israel would have been "consumed." But Moses did not leave the divine presence; he did not cease from his intercessions. They were irresistible; God was moved, persuaded, overcome; He "repented;" the people escaped; they could not be destroyed, while such prayers were rising in their behalf. Does not the interdiction of believing prayers, when they contravene the divine purpose, prove them mighty and effectual?

* Thomson's Translation.

When God intends to withhold any mercy, he never grants his people this irresistible importunity in prayer.

2. How great the privilege, which this doctrine imparts to praying believers. Once, and again, and again, the Saviour promises, "Ask, and ye *shall* receive." "And all things, whatsoever, ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" or, as this may be rendered with very little variation, "Moreover, ye shall obtain whatever ye shall pray for in faith." Or according to another recent translation, "And whatever ye ask in prayer, with faith, ye shall obtain." If such passages do not mean precisely what they say, what then is their meaning? Have they no meaning but for the age of miracles? Have they for a thousand, and half a thousand years been useless, or delusory parts of the sacred oracles? If your prayer is not effectual, what must be the cause? Is God unfaithful to his word; or are you wanting in faith and perseverance in your supplications? I need not multiply such quotations as the following; because they are so numerous. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it *shall be done* unto you." "He will fulfil the desire of them, he also *will hear their cry*, and will save them." How precious are such promises; how consoling to the bleeding heart, sweeter than honey, dropping from the comb. Are you led into severe temptations, and impelled to crimes; are you tempted to doubt the truth of the divine promises; raise your heart to God; the trial will pass away; or you will have strength to resist its power. Are you oppressed with enemies;

do they hurl a javelin to destroy you? They will only wound themselves, or batter their own walls. Are you oppressed with want; are you destitute and afflicted? Be *importunate* with God; and the windows of heaven shall be opened; your bread and your water shall be sure.

Are you sick; are friends and physicians forsaking you; remember Hezekiah, and with his ardour and his faith, cry to your Father in heaven, and he will hear and heal you. Such persevering prayers, offered with appropriate faith, furnished Jacob with provision on his journey, gave to Paul the sailors in the ship, and to Mordecai and Esther the lives of their nation. Here were no miracles, no faith of miracles; but a faith which secures its object.

Well might the apostle say to believers, possessing such a privilege, "All things are yours."

3. We learn why many prayers are not answered. If they be not graceless, if they be not destitute of that faith, which is necessary to please God, they have not a clear, and strong conviction, that the *glory of God* is involved in their answer. They are not animated with due fervour; they have not the strength of perseverance; they are not offered in the spirit and manner of successful prayer; they will not be answered.

4. Does not the subject present a convincing, and mighty argument for prayer?

In every necessity, in every want, in every desire, shall we not remember, that in God is a boundless store of all good things? He is infinitely willing to grant us the riches of felicity. No kind father is so willing to gratify his beloved children. He only re-

quires us to *ask*, to ask *believing* the promise of God. He is always ready to hear. He never grudges us any favour of any kind. He will give, when we ask and are prepared to receive the favour.

With such a Benefactor, with such "power with God," what may you not obtain? May not your prayers render yourselves rich in comforts and consolations, and others blest? May not your prayers be a defence to yourself and friends, like the electric rod, which silently conveys away the forked lightning from the social dwelling! Is it, my friends, within the scope of the human mind, to conceive a doctrine more animating, more encouraging?

Will not every person be persuaded, be resolved and impelled, to cry day and night, while he has a trouble to be removed, a want to be supplied, a comfort to be secured? If you are not blest, is it not because you are too drowsy to feel, or too slothful to pray for help, or too proud to accept deliverance at the hand of sovereign mercy? He, who listens to the cry of ravens, and taketh care of oxen, cannot harden himself against the voice of your prayer. Neither the skill of David in war, nor the strength of Sampson, were so sure a defence, as the feeblest hand lifted to God in holy prayer. The weeping widow, the sighing orphan, the defenceless stranger, are all heard. Will not all, then, who need help, bow the knee, and raise the voice of prayer? So may you procure blessings invaluable, for yourself, your family, your friends, your country, and the world.

Devoutly resolve then, my dear friends, each one for himself, "As for me, I will call upon God; I will

cry unto God, most High, unto God, who performeth all things for me.

Finally; Have not more than common prayers been offered of late years?

Are not the effects manifest; are they not encouraging to perseverance? Are we not safe in designating the cause from the effect? When we see a field or garden, covered with fruit or flowers, we infer that the hand of cultivation has been there, that the sun has shone, that the rain has fallen. So, when we see the prevalent objects of prayer, every-where conspicuous in a new and wonderful manner, we unavoidably conclude that believing, fervent prayers have been offered. When we see Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Humane Societies, Education Societies, and lastly, though not the least important, Peace Societies, shedding their lustre over the world, splendid as the constellations of heaven; when the Spirit of the Lord is extensively poured out on every quarter of the world; when thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, are gathered into the visible Church; when silver and gold in surprising sums are freely cast into the treasury of the Lord; when missionaries of the cross are going forth to people of every nation and language, can we doubt whether prayer has been offered, and prayer answered? Do we not hear God saying in his Providence, as well as in his word, "Ask and ye shall receive," "Command ye me?"

Are these things the fruit of man's device or power? Had the Legislature of the State, forty years ago, assessed those sums, which are now cheerfully con-

tributed, for religious purposes, would it not have produced insurrection? At that period could all the orators of the world have persuaded the nobles and princes, the kings and emperors of Europe, to come down from their thrones, to aid Bible and Missionary Societies in sending the news of salvation to Pagans and Mahometans? Who, but that God, who is the Author of the divine word, could have caused those intrepid heroes of the North, those thunderbolts of war, at the battles of Moscow, of Leipsic, and Waterloo, to sheathe their swords, drunk with the blood of slaughter, to clothe themselves in the robes of peace, to send the word of life to all the tribes of Adam, to cause the light beaming from the sword of the Spirit to shed its cheering rays through their most barbarous provinces, changing the dismal night of heathen darkness into the light of moral day? The Christian world bows before the impulse, as a forest before the wind. The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters to produce this world of order and beauty; so is He now moving to produce knowledge, and holiness, and a millennium of glory. Ethiopia stretches forth her hand for the cup of salvation; the isles wait for the law, and of them, it may be said, "A nation is born in a day." The feeble Hindoo, the cautious Chinese, the red man of the forest, listen to the strains of gospel mercy.

This, and much more is the fruit of prayer. It is prayer, which has caused the cloud, small at first, like that which the servant of the prophet saw from the top of Carmel, to extend far and wide, distilling its

showers in the North and South, watering the burning plains of Africa, converting her deserts into fields and gardens. In answer to *believing*, *persevering* prayer, the nations are waking from the slumber of ages, and inquiring for "the balm of Gilead and the physician there." They are raising their eye to the tree of life, bearing its fruit every month, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The Star from the East is shedding its light on every land, and the hymn of angels is again sung in the fields of Bethlehem. Looking to the cross of Calvary, pagans exclaim, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Devout women, not a few, are making costly preparations, not to embalm the body of Jesus, not to perfume his tomb; but to extend the glory of his name, to rescue ignorance from its errours, and vice from its miseries. As if refreshed with the dews of Hermon, the rose of Sharon blossoms in the wilds of Tartary, and on the shores of the Caspian; the vines of Eshcol are planted in the isles of the sea, and the forests of America; the cedars of Lebanon wave on the banks of the Ganges and shade the palaces of Ava; the songs of Zion echo from the hills of Greenland, and the angel is flying through the heavens, having the everlasting gospel to preach to the inhabitants of the earth, to every nation, and tribe, and language, and people.

When believing and fervent prayers shall become general and constant; then greater things than these will take place; the Spirit of the Lord will be poured forth without measure; liberty and science will

break the chains of despotism; the useful arts, pure morals, Christian principles, will give a new aspect to society; piety and benevolence will rule the hearts of men; and one united chorus of praise ascend from all the domestic altars, and all the religious assemblies of the human family. *Amen and Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

GENESIS xviii, 19.

For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him.

THAT mankind were formed for improvement is too evident to require any formal proof. That our improvement is generally considered a matter of high importance, many things evidently prove. Not only the great expense incurred, and patient labour endured, to accomplish the purpose, but a thousand other circumstances, proclaim the high estimation in which intellectual culture is holden.

The constantly increasing pleasure of advancing knowledge, indicates that we are pursuing an impulse of nature, and obeying the will of God. Travel to yonder forest. It is silent, gloomy, dismal. Cut down the trees, break up the ground, sow the seed, and behold a field of blossoms and fruit. So great and more important is the change produced by education. As the Chinese clay assumes the form of beauty, as a block of marble becomes a Venus or a

Hercules, so the human character is formed by education.

Hear the profound Legislator of Israel. "For I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." He will command,—his influence with his children will be efficacious, irresistible, unchangeable as the laws of the Medes.

This opinion of education was held by Solomon nine hundred years after, when he declared, without any qualification, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This same opinion was prevalent a thousand years after Solomon, and for substance repeatedly expressed by the writers of the New Testament. They require "parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The whole mass of evidence from all antiquity shows the efficacy of early instruction.

Doctrine. Mankind will be what their education makes them.

We use the word *education* in its most extensive import, not having any exclusive reference to a university or college, to a school or private family, but we include all the impressions made on a human being from its first existence to the hour of death, or at least to the time of his entering on business, when the character is supposed to be formed. Hence no parent or tutor can be wholly responsible. The company—books—employment—a sound heard—an ob-

ject seen—a pain—a pleasure, may give a new turn to the disposition.

Though superiour influence must be ascribed to schools and seminaries, and other institutions of civilized society, yet education may be defined, that whole series of means by which the understanding is gradually enlightened, and the dispositions of the heart are formed. This comprehends the circumstances of the child as to local situation, the manner in which the comforts of life are furnished him, the degree of care and tenderness with which he is nursed, the examples set before him, the restraints imposed, the liberty allowed, the languages, the arts and sciences which are taught him, the *manner* in which they are communicated; and above all, the moral and religious instruction, and even the state of the health, dress and diet, all go to produce what I shall call EDUCATION.—In fact, every impression made on the infant—on the child—on the youth, makes a part of his education. Every influence, from the first hour of life, before he sees the light, to the closing scene, helps to make the man.

My design is not to designate the best mode of education. This I leave to more powerful and better informed minds, but to illustrate the FACT that education forms the mind of man, and then suggest a few reflections.

I. I infer the irresistible force of education, from the general resemblance of character, in the different states of society, the savage, the barbarian, the civilized.

Though there is some difference amongst individuals, who most nearly resemble each other, as among flowers of the same seed, yet a general likeness prevails among men in the same state of society. Having seen one savage, you have for substance seen the whole tribe. Having seen one tribe, you have a general view of all the tribes on the globe.

Go, take command of a vessel, sail round the world, discover an island never before heard of, return and tell me your island is inhabited, but the people have no *iron*, say not a word more, and I will inform you that they are savages. I will describe their character, customs and manners. I will inform you how they obtain a living, what are their houses and their navigation, what their morals and their religion. I will tell you the manner in which they treat their females. I will tell you that in their religion they pay homage to a variety of deities, that they consider every thing remarkable, such as a volcano, an earthquake, or an eclipse, as a manifestation of a particular god. I will tell you that the wives are slaves to the husbands, that they are compelled to perform the laborious drudgery of the family. I will tell you that their chief support is from hunting or fishing, that a few shells or baskets constitute their most valuable furniture, that they are filthy and brutal in their manners, revengeful, cruel and warlike in their character. I might enumerate many other particulars with almost the same exactness as if I had lived amongst them. This sameness of character in the same state of society, from the Arctic ocean to the stormy regions of Cape Horn, displays the irresistible force of educa-

tion. These tribes have been educated as savages. They are savages for the want of iron.

The same doctrine is equally displayed in the barbarous or shepherd state of society, where men procure their living chiefly from their flocks and herds. This description includes a considerable section of the human family. A great part of the Arabs in Asia and Africa, and numerous hordes of wandering Tartars live chiefly on the milk of their flocks and herds. To accompany and provide them pasturage, is the business of their lives. Such people have a character peculiar to themselves. They are indolent, they are addicted to music and story telling, they are superstitious in their religion, yet hospitable to strangers.

If among civilized men, this unity of character seems to be less perfect, it is not less real. The degrees of civilization are immensely varied, among individuals and communities. This must produce a corresponding variety of character. The multiplicity of arts, of employments and professions, produces other points of difference. Still the strong features of character are the same, they are permanent and fixed.

In all civilized nations, intellectual and moral improvement are more valued than bodily strength. In such countries men obtain their support by the practice of the arts. In them, the precepts and doctrines of their religion are written and known, and public solemnities give importance to their faith. They have written codes of laws, established forms of government, and known tribunals of justice, to guard the rights of individuals. This general resemblance

pervades the civilized nations in all the three continents. As a strong proof of likeness among all civilized people, let a single savage intrude himself into any such community, and he will be immediately recognized as such, he will be gazed at as a phenomenon. So irresistible is the force of education, that not a single savage was ever raised in a civilized community, not a single civilized man was ever found in a tribe of savages.

II. The mighty power of education is visible in the different *religions* of mankind. As to religion, the human family may be considered in three divisions, the Pagan, Christian, and Mahometan. I ought perhaps not to forget the Jews. In each of these sections a general and strong resemblance of character is manifest. The pagans are all superstitious, they all believe in a plurality of gods, most of them are idolaters. They generally worship the sun or moon, or some idol, or other object of the senses. Pagans do not know the true God who made heaven and earth. They may be well versed in the sciences, they may have profound skill in the useful and fine arts. Yet they make little or no advance in rational religion. They sometimes are unrivalled masters in those arts, which adorn and dignify society, yet in the things of God, they are nearly as ignorant and stupid as the savages of the forest. The history of ancient Greece and Rome, and of modern India and China establishes all this. The world by all their wisdom do not know God. They may build the stupendous pyramids, they may rear the lofty temple, and the opulent city. Their laws may be wise, their elo-

quence irresistible, their music enchanting, their painting may give life and passion to the canvass, the songs of their bards may be heard till they are drowned by the trump of God in the great day, yet they cannot show one sin forgiven, nor lead a step beyond the grave. The same blindness of mind covers all the pagan nations, ancient and modern. There education displays her full power. The son wanders in the gross darkness which bewildered his father. A similar general resemblance is evident among the followers of Mahomet. They believe in the same impostor, they adopt the same articles of faith, they practise the same superstitions, they believe in the necessity of a pilgrimage to Mecca, they perform the same ablutions and devotions which their fathers performed a thousand years ago, they indulge the same virulent prejudices against the disciples of Jesus Christ, and like their fathers, look forward to the delights of a sensual paradise. The force of education triumphs over reason, and all the tender charities of the heart.

Notwithstanding the variety of sects and parties amongst Christians, yet they have strong features of resemblance to distinguish them from Pagans and Mahomedans. Christians all agree in the belief and worship of one God, that man is imperfect, and needs the mercy of God, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Saviour, that there will be a resurrection and general judgment, that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. So powerful is the influence of education, that not one Pagan, not one Mahometan, grows up in a Christian community. While Christianity opposes all the corruptions, all the lusts

of man, and the other two religions are indulgent to those lusts, yet no Christian revolts, and adopts the creed or worship of a Mahometan or a Pagan. Even if an individual, through the wickedness of his heart, does apostatize and abjure Christianity, where these sects live together, he does not become truly a Pagan, he does not become entirely a Mahometan, he still retains many sound and orthodox opinions.

The still stronger and more uniform resemblance among persons of the same communion, the same sect or denomination, more perfectly exhibits the sway of education. Here men become, as it were, the same. They are recognized by the same phrases, the same opinions, the same prejudices, the same manners, the same cast of countenance. Some of the sects are instantly known not merely by their dress, but by their visage, their personal appearance. Perhaps all might be, were they to continue together through life.

III. I only add, that the sameness of appearance, of character, and manners, among people of the same calling and employment, is a fact which supports our doctrine. No man is able to conceal his vocation. His speech, his appearance betray him. If this should not at once be admitted, it may be accounted for by the fact, that many men occupy themselves in a variety of employments, and have not therefore the distinct characteristics of either. But in those countries where professions are distinctly separated, the difference is evident to every beholder. A European will discern the profession or employment of a person, with a readiness which astonishes a person of this country. "There is no man," says Dr. Johnson.

"who works at a particular trade, but you may discover it from his appearance." But even in this country, where trades and professions are so blended, who is so blind as not in a moment to discern which is the husbandman, and which the mariner? which the soldier and which the merchant? which the clergyman and which the physician? Each of these professions has a distinct language, distinct manners, opinions, and morals.

In unison with this, it is a common remark of geographical writers, that "well bred people, in all civilized nations, are much alike." Notwithstanding national distinctions, they always recognize each other.

I might easily enlarge and illustrate the doctrine in a vast variety of particulars, but your own reflections will pursue the subject, and render enlargement unnecessary. The more the subject is examined, the stronger will be the conviction, that the influence of education is irresistible.

Education preserves the peculiarities of individuals, brings them nearer to a common standard, and gives them that likeness of appearance which under the same kind of culture is every where so evident.

Education is a furnace which consumes the excrescencies of personal character, melts down the mass of the community, till it becomes in a degree one body, of the same colour, texture, and quality.

Objections may be made to the doctrine before us, and so may plausible objections be made to the divine goodness, and even to the existence of God, but objections do not disprove facts.

It may may be said that wicked children may be found in the best families.

This instead of weakening the principle, is a new proof that even transient impressions may be powerful and irresistible. It shews that not only uniform and systematic lessons may be powerful, but that those which are incidental may be permanent in their effects. Occasional impressions may be indelible.

You will bear in mind, that by education is not meant merely the lessons of the mother or master, the impressions of the nursery or the school-room, but all those ten thousand thousand impressions, examples, objects, books, and sounds, which make a man what he is.

It is not believed that the greatest number of lessons, or the longest lessons, will always have the greatest effect. No. You cannot calculate the effect of education from its *quantity*, as you do of nitrous grain in a rock. No. The temper, and the force, and the adaptation, and the time, and the place, and the character of the parties, all come in for an incalculable share of the influence. Sometimes one look will triumph over all the impressions made by whole libraries, one companion will make a deeper impression than the whole circle of friends had done. Sometimes one WORD may do more to form the character, than all the sermons, all the lectures, and all the conversation ever heard. A youth, who has been frank, open, unguarded, may, by the reading of one book, become prudent, cautious, circumspect. A youth, who had been sedate, reserved, serious, by a change of companions may become cheerful, gay and

humerous. Some such incidental cause may produce the difference of virtue and vice in the same house. Children of the same house do not all receive the same impressions, they do not hear, they do not see the same things. They are very far from receiving the same education. One is at home, while his brother or sister is abroad. In these different places they see and hear things very different. One child reads this book, another that. One child is sickly, and finds in his parents a nurse and a physician. One is wilful and headstrong, and views his parents as two officers of justice. One is mild, modest, docile, and finds his parents delightful companions. In these different circumstances, must not the character of the children be formed in a different manner, be imbued with a different spirit? While these things unite to shew the difficulty and the danger, in executing the business of education, they have no tendency to lessen its importance. While we discover the delicacy of the task, we also learn how powerful are impressions, and how necessary are wholesome discipline and a uniform system of instruction and example.

Nor is it more difficult to show why children often acquire a character different from their parents. It may be said, very often, that the parent does not educate his own child, even when he dwells under the same roof, eats at the same table, and is warmed at the same fire. Some other persons, very different from the parent, may have more influence. Some other teacher, or some other company, may be forming the mind of the child. This circumstance will always render the religious education of children

extremely difficult, till all parents, and all persons shall engage in the grand design. Then the minds of children will not be poisoned the moment they go abroad. We may with deep humility add, that until religious parents are more religious, we may not witness the full effect of domestic education. Still, children are the creatures of education, of imperfect, and if I may so say, of heterogeneous education.

Again, sometimes by a dislike to the character of the parent, that of the child is indirectly formed to an opposite one. The child of a prodigal parent experiences the misery of the vice, and is taught the virtue of frugality. The child of a vain, weak, and volatile parent, is mortified by such puerile frivolity, and is thus taught to be steady, sedate and thoughtful. On the same principle, children of injudicious pious parents may be pushed into irreligion and vice. The rigid and austere requirements, and the tedious admonitions and the long prayers, and severe deportment of some such parents, though I think the instances very rare, may disgust the child, and render religion odious, and excite him to impiety and vice. Sometimes vice and folly may be designedly presented before the eyes of children. The Spartans permitted their children to see their slaves drunken that they might abhor the brutal vice. A jail and its pale tenants, its iron doors, and dismal dungeons may be a profitable sight to children. God himself seems to have adopted this principle in the education of his people. To punish and to cure them of idolatry, he sends them captive to Babylon, a land of idols. He had taught them by precepts and examples, by terrours and by

judgments, all in vain. He then gave them a surfeit of idolatry, and this wrought an effectual cure. Still all these children and people are formed by circumstances, they are creatures of education.

With a few reflections, we close the subject.

I. We see the sovereignty of God, in disposing the lots of men, so that they are made what they are. Circumstances are the media of light and darkness, of life and death. These circumstances are arranged by divine Providence. How mysterious are those dispensations, which appoint the boundaries of men. Who will ask the Almighty why he has placed whole nations beyond the limits of the Gospel? Who will demand of him why he has sent out the wild Arab, his hand against every man, whose house he has made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling, who scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth the laws of a master. The range of the desert is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. Who will ask the Most High why Pharaoh and Herod were placed in such imminent circumstances? Why Samuel and Timothy received such high moral culture? Why the babe taken from the ark of bulrushes was so taught as to become the legislator of nations? Why twelve fishermen of Galilee were so placed as finally to change the religand morals of the world? Father, it is thus, because thy will chose and ordained it should be so.

II. As children are formed by education, how important is it that they enjoy the means best adapted to their capacities and prospects. It is not necessary that all should be eminently learned, but it is neces-

sary that all should receive instructions, suitable to their dispositions and stations. Will not children and parents thank God and take courage in view of their numerous privileges? What a weight of obligations does this subject devolve on parents! Think, oh think of your great work, of your serious responsibility. Will you suffer your children to grope in darkness, while the lamps of science and religion are shining around them? Shall the minds of your children famish in ignorance, while the trees of religious knowledge are loaded with fruit, the branches bending to the reach of the smallest babe? Shall they starve, because a little trouble and expense is required in gathering the fruit? If your children remain untaught and unsanctified, their education, or rather their want of education, makes them what they are.

III. From the subject, we may infer the uniformity and efficacy of divine influence on the human mind. I allow it is not owing to any inherent power of the human character, that such uniform or general results are produced, by intellectual or moral culture. It is not by the natural power of education, but by the imperceptible influence of the divine Spirit, that minds are formed in such a regular succession of uniformity, that we can augur beforehand, what will be their complexion, texture, character. As there is nothing in the nature of inert matter, to produce gravitation and attraction, which are nothing more than the power of God constantly exerted to impress those laws, which bind the material universe with invisible chains, which give it a fixed direction from which it never swerves; so there is no efficient cause or power in

the lessons of education to produce those permanent effects, which continue from generation to generation. It is the Spirit and providential power of God impressing the mind, which produce, and which continue these uniform results. Were these withheld, no such regular effects would follow. All would be an intellectual and moral chaos. It becomes us then, to look to God for his blessing, to implore the dews of his grace, when we cultivate the olive plants around our table, as devoutly as when we plough our fields or weed our gardens. In both species of cultivation, we are entirely dependent on the Spirit of God, the salutary influence of heaven. The farmer may plough, the gardener may sow, Paul may plant, and Apollos water the seed, parents and preceptors may inculcate the doctrines of science and religion, yet if God withhold his merciful influence, all is useless. The best gardens will become barren, the best families will produce Absaloms and Rehoboams. For the Spirit of God then let us pray, and on the Spirit of God let us depend, while we "rear the tender thought, and teach the young idea how to shoot." Those, who are discouraged and careless and neglect the duty of education, because it does not infallibly communicate wisdom, rebel against the great law of the universe. This errour, no doubt, often induces neglect of moral and intellectual culture. Truth perverted is sometimes more dangerous than palpable falsehood. Without education or instruction, the Spirit of God does not produce wisdom or grace. The Spirit operates by means. Nothing is effected, not even miracles, without means. Unless the architect labour, the

Lord will not build the house. Unless men are taught to abandon savage life, to cast away their idols, to attend the institutions of religion and civilization, the Spirit of God does not enlighten or sanctify them. Truth is the medium through which the Holy Spirit operates. Intellectual and moral instruction is the powerful agent, by which God prepares the mind for his favour, expands the mental capacities, elevates the character, sanctifies the affections, and prepares fallen men to rival angels in the kingdom of glory. Though education be powerless itself, it is the instrument of Almighty power to form of a worm of dust an heir of heaven. However ineffectual any or all means of instruction may be in themselves, yet by divine influence, they are the lights to guide us through this world, the great links in the golden chain of our salvation.

The mariner may as well cast away his compass, because it is not capable of itself to direct his ship across the stormy deep, as parents neglect the education of their families, because education does not of itself convey prudence or grace. Unless the compass be carefully regarded, the ship will never find its port; unless education be wisely directed, the children of men will not acquire wisdom, human or divine. The Holy Spirit will not enlighten and convert the nations, without a course of instruction. Moral instruction, religious education, is the grand medium of divine operations. This might be confirmed by the fact, that those who are truly pious, become so by the instruction they receive in religious families. If there be some enlightened by other means, they form a

fractional part, so small, as to make no considerable addition to the census of the Christian church. The church then is the sacred lamp destined to enlighten all the nations. The church is the hope of the world. Her moral culture will render this rebellious province of Jehovah as mount Zion, where the tribes kindled the fire of sacrifice. She will transform this wilderness into the garden of the Lord. We are not to suppose that light will burst from the clouds and overwhelm the nation, as it did Saul on the road to Damascus. No, the missionaries of the cross will traverse the world having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. Schools of the prophets will be increased, Education Societies will be supported, the minds of children will be formed to virtue and godliness; and whenever such a system of education shall become UNIVERSAL, then will the day of the millennium shine. When the rulers of nations shall unite in a truly holy alliance, when Peace Societies shall be established among the people, when the empire of benevolence shall be universal, then will holiness to the Lord be inscribed on the bells of your horses.

In future years, the learned historian of the millennium, seeking materials for his work, will explore the archives of Christendom. Coming down to this century, he may employ some profound antiquarian to open their books, to decipher their characters. Then will he discover the year when Education Societies gave a new impulse to the Christian public, when Christian morals were required in teachers of chil-

dren, when Sunday schools visited the regions of ignorance and vice, when Peace Societies, when Bible and Missionary Societies, first shed their glorious light over the darkness of this world. Having established the dates of these events, the historian will pause in his narrative and exclaim, "here was the beginning of the millennial age, here was the dawn of that day which has shone so long and so bright, whose meridian splendours yet dazzle and delight the world." Proceeding in his research, exploring the marble tombs, the historian may form a splendid catalogue of the founders, the presidents, and munificent patrons of the Societies, which are now sending instruction, light, comfort and salvation, to the most distant corners of the globe.

These children of benevolence, these men of holy renown he will honour as the great agents of God in introducing a thousand years of peace and joy, these men he will applaud as angels of charity, these he will eulogize as the deliverers of mankind from sin and ruin.

Finally, how important are the periods of childhood and youth. In these periods, education is chiefly acquired, the character is then formed, the person generally becomes what he is to be forever and ever. What is sown in spring will be reaped in autumn. The impressions and passions of childhood and youth will be experienced in old age. Every thing, my young friends, is infinitely important to you. As the atmosphere in some places conveys health, in others death, so the place where you live may cause moral health, or spiritual death. The books which you read, the

sermons which you hear, may convey saving truth or fatal errour. One wicked companion may be as fatal to you, as the serpent in Paradise. One evil example may disturb your judgment, may fascinate your imagination, may inflame your passions; one alluring word, one enticing look, may, like enchantment, relax the vigour of your resolution, and plunge you down the gulf of ruin. Take heed, then, to all your ways, your labours, your amusements, your studies, your words, your thoughts;—the objects which you see, the sounds which you hear. "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

1 COR. xiii, 12.

Now I know in part.

Did mankind know how weak are their mental powers, it might subdue their pride, humble their vain glory. Were they conscious how partial and imperfect are their most liberal attainments in knowledge, it might cure their contempt of others, and often convert their bitter reproaches to pleasant strains of approbation. This knowledge of our own weakness has a powerful tendency to render the heart affectionate, the language kind, the manners gentle, the man holy. It produceth that charity which hopeth all things, believeth all things, thinketh no evil, becometh all things to all men.

Saul of Tarsus, with Stephen and Barnabas, had received his education at the celebrated school of Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. He was well acquainted with the orthodoxy of the Jews and the literature of the Greeks. He had enjoyed visions and revelations, he had been caught up to the third heaven, to Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, yet he humbly says, "I know in *part*." 'Although I have an imme-

diate revelation from God, concerning his great design in the gospel, yet there are lengths and breadths, depths and heights of his design, which even revelation has not discovered. I know many facts, but the reasons and designs of divine operation I do not comprehend.'

So Job, after enumerating many known facts,—that God had garnished the heavens with stars, and hung the earth upon nothing, that he binds the waters in the clouds, and that hell is uncovered before him, says, "Lo, these are a portion of his ways." How little a portion is heard of him, how very little is understood. Nor is this difficulty confined to revelation. To understand any science requires wearisome labour. Ask the astronomer, the mathematician, or historian, They all say, "with a great price of labour we obtained our knowledge."

Religion is no more clouded with mystery than other sciences. Nor does the veil of mystery or incomprehensibility, which is spread over all things, and which renders the acquisition of knowledge, human and divine, laborious and imperfect, lessen the happiness of man. It rather gives life, energy and felicity to the mind.

To pursue, to investigate the secrets of science, is the mental food, the life and glory of the human mind. Could we at once glance an eye through all the mysteries of nature and revelation, the mind would soon become wearied and satiated with the sameness of its views, and like Alexander, weep because there were no more difficulties to conquer, no more mysteries to explore.

Doctrine. In this life our knowledge of all things, human or divine, is very limited. We all know only in part.

1. We know but little respecting creation and the operations of nature. The fact that something exists, has been created, is evident. But how did God create? Here you are lost. No explanation can be given. The possibility of a creation from nothing was denied by all pagan antiquity. Infidels of modern times have made the same assertion an argument against revelation.

A thousand circumstances respecting creation are inexplicable. Why did God create so many different species of creatures? Many of them seem unnecessary, some of them injurious. If they were not necessary or useful, why were they created? If they were useful, why has not their Creator preserved them all? Why has he suffered so many whole species to be destroyed, making, as we should think, a chasm in his own work? Many whole species of animals, from the immense Mammoth, or "Behemoth," down to the races of smaller cattle which once rambled in the forest, or rioted in the pasture, have disappeared. We know not how many, but one celebrated philosopher of Europe* has discovered the bones or fossil remains of forty-nine species of quadrupeds, which are now unknown and probably extinct. What then becomes of the popular doctrine of philosophy and poetry,

> "From nature's chain, whatever link you strike,
> Tenth, or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike."

* M. Cuvier.

Did the world, when first created, contain its present variety of earths and minerals, or was it an uniform homogeneous body, earth or water or somewhat else, the iron, granite and other substances, being subsequently formed? By what power have these transitions been effected?

We know, in part, the blessing of the shining sun. He clothes the spring with blossoms, the autumn with harvests, he opens enchanting prospects to our vision, and renders this world a delightful habitation for man; but what is his influence on other planets? Do the inhabitants of Jupiter, if there be any, welcome his approach, or "like the wild beasts of the desert, when the sun riseth, do they lay themselves down in their dens?"

How are the fires of burning mountains kindled? What is their use? What is their fuel? How are the planets holden where they are? By whose dial do they regulate their courses? What force impels them through infinite space? Why does not "earth unbalanced from her orbit fly?" Philosophers tell us much of gravitation and attraction. What are these wonderful powers? The properties of matter, or the agency of God?

The fixed stars, what is their use? Merely to twinkle in the darkness, or shine they, suns to other worlds? What worlds? Who has seen them? Who has heard the thunder of their artillery?

Whence come the comets? What is their errand? Do they come merely to alarm the ignorant and amuse the learned? How far do the regions of space extend? Are they filled with worlds and suns and

stars? How many planets, how many systems, wheel their orbs beyond our remotest star?

How many "embryo systems and unkindled suns" are about to burst, with new splendour, from night and silence? Since the morning stars sang together, how many suns have been shining, whose light has not yet reached our world?

"Have the gates of death been opened to thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Declare if thou hast understanding. Lo these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him." We know in part. We imagine but a small part of his ways.

II. We know but little respecting the providence of God. Here again we know many facts, but we do not understand their connexion, tendency, or design.

Surveying the work which he had made, the earth and heavens, men and angels, God pronounced all very good. In this moment of felicity and glory, while the songs of angels proclaimed the excellence of creation, sin entered the world. Before the great Builder had turned away his eye from the work of his hand, under the immediate shadow of his arm, and while the walls of Paradise yet trembled at the threatening of death just pronounced, man seized the forbidden fruit, man revolted. Clouds gathered, the sun grew pale, death entered the world. This new province of God in a moment is lost. Why did Omnipotence suffer this? Why did he not drive back the tempting angel? Why did he not fortify the purity of our first mother? Why did evil enter his perfect government?

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Although God governs, evil is continued. Fever, consumption, and ten thousand miseries, destroy the hopes of man. Our fathers, where are they? Our children, many of them, slumber in the narrow house. They were more lovely than all the blossoms of spring, more precious than all the fruits of autumn.

A part, a small part of his ways, may be understood, but such partial light, renders darkness more visible.

In the common evils of pestilence and war, we discover some good. By the conquests of Alexander, the Greek language was rendered extensively familiar, *to hasten the progress of the Scriptures*, which were soon after translated from the Hebrew into that language. So, afterwards, by the Roman victories, the march of the Apostles was secured through the world. But why do wars continue, continue among Christians, the disciples of the Prince of peace? Why, since the reign of Constantine, have two hundred and eighty-six wars crimsoned the world with blood? For what reason have half a score of wars been waged to convert heretics?

Will the sword convince the conscience? Will the fatal artillery enlighten the understanding, or amend the heart? Blow the trumpet, bid the legions march, cover the field with the bodies of heretics. Have you enlightened one mind? Have you convinced one conscience? Have you saved one soul? If the law now protects the peaceful citizen, and *such* persecution be impracticable, will you organize a spiritual tribunal,

nominate the judges, and arraign the erroneous professor of Christianity?

The prisoner pleads guilty. "This I confess, that after the way which ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." Will you drive the victim from society, render him as infamous as possible? *One moment pause.* Will this severity conciliate his esteem? Will this intolerance soften his heart, or reconcile him to gospel doctrines?

These things have been done in every age of the church. In some regions they are now done. God in his providence suffers them to be done. But who can explain their wisdom? We know in part. Clouds and darkness are round about him.

III. The objects of the sciences, or the sciences themselves, are very imperfectly understood.

By diligent study and investigation, we may examine and learn something of the objects of science. Compared with entire ignorance, we may learn much. Still our attainments are but partial and limited. What is the nature of spirit, of mind? Can spirit operate on matter, can it move trees and rocks? If not, how does the mind move the body? How did men raise the pyramids of Egypt, or the walls of Babylon? How does God wheel the orbs of heaven?

Whence does the sun borrow his heat and light? Is it a globe of fire, or, according to modern astronomy, a solid and dark mass, encompassed with a resplendent covering?

Is your knowledge of yourself perfect? What is the soul? How is it united with the body? What is the

ligament which connects them together? Why does a broken bone distress the mind? Why do anxiety and sorrow wear out the body?

By what power is a wound or broken bone healed? By what mechanism is the blood impelled from the heart, and returned from the arteries through the veins?

Food nourishes the body, but who can tell how it is changed to blood, to flesh and bones, to nerves and sinews? There is a vein for silver and a place for gold. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten from the stones, but how are these metals, with the topaz, the jasper, and other gems, formed in the bowels of the earth?

How are chrystals produced, with their polished sides, their exact angles, and why do so many substances assume the chrystal form, as water congealing, gems and metals? By what process is the difference made, between the coal in the furnace of the chemist, and the diamond on his finger?

Human science cannot answer these simple queries. Not only is the nature of cause and effect wrapt in darkness, but the sciences, the pride of man, are imperfectly understood. What single science has reached its highest point, admitting no improvement? Does the anatomist perfectly understand his science, limited to the narrow compass of the human frame? He cuts and dissects with little ceremony. He often makes great parade of his skill. He learns the use of the veins, the arteries, the muscles; but some parts he does not understand. Many things he cannot explain. Who can account for involuntary motion, for the

action of the lungs while we are asleep, or in fact for the action of the heart, and the power of breathing, while we are awake?

Is the physician master of his art? Would to God he were! Our hearts would not so often bleed. I venerate the profession, I love the men. But ask the man seized with an epilepsy, how perfect is their skill. Ask the lovely youth, pining in a consumption. They, with anguish and despair, will tell you, "Miserable comforters are they all."

Has the geographer "fully perceived the breadth of the earth?" He sails round the globe, he draws his maps and his charts. Now ask the most learned what tribes inhabit the regions of Africa? Where is the head of the Nile, or the mouth of the Niger? Is it land or water at the poles? His learning fails him. He does not answer. Again you may ask him, where was Eden, where was Ararat, where was Tarshish, the mart of Solomon's fleet, where was Sheba, whose queen came to his court, with spices, gold, and precious stones? He cannot tell. In all the pride of science, the astronomer lifts his glass, he descries the planets and the stars, but he can neither count their number, nor tell their design.

Nay; ye who till the ground, and believe ye need no book to instruct you; can you explain the cause why corn and grass flourish more in one region than in another? Why a handful of pulverized stone will double the growth in a hill of corn? Can you explain why the seed must first perish, to yield thirty or an hundred fold?

"Lo these are a part of his ways, how little is understood" pertaining to the sciences, when all the study, all the genius of man, is exhausted.

IV. Our knowledge of revelation is partial and limited.

As a system of necessary truth, the gospel is perspicuous. It is where usefulness terminates, that *impervious* obscurity commences. The divine oracles contain a series of facts, and precepts, and promises, on a due regard to which our happiness depends. These are plain. Doctrines and duties, when considered only as they are revealed, seldom present difficulties to the mind. It is when we begin to develope their design and consistency, that, like the men round the door of Lot, we find ourselves blind and lost. It is when men, like Milton's fallen angels, dispute respecting, "providence, fate, free will, and foreknowledge absolute," that they are "in wandering mazes lost." The perplexity commences, when we undertake to shew the necessity, the rationale or harmony of points which are not revealed, and in which we have no concern. The inspired writers clear up no seeming inconsistencies, they reconcile no apparent contradictions. Why should we then puzzle ourselves in the vain attempt? Would men stop where the oracles of God become silent, they might enjoy light and peace. The Sadducees were not content with the simple fact, the soul will exist in a future state. They must inquisitively ask, which husband of seven the widow would have in the next world. They were not satisfied with the plain doctrine, the body will rise again. They

must sagely inquire, with *what* bodies will they rise. Proud men! they might have left these problems to infinite wisdom.

It is the part of humble faith to believe *right on*, just as truths are recorded in the word of God. It is a restless, unhallowed curiosity which pries into the secret things of God. These God has not revealed. While his providence is made known, the mode of its execution is incomprehensible.

As the guide to eternal life, the gospel is plain. It was designed for the weak, the ignorant. The pleas of philosophy or natural religion need not be heard. The simple question is, what does the Bible say. Believe this, or reject revelation itself. It plainly asserts the being of God, the Creator, Governour, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of men, the lost state of man, the duty of repentance, faith and obedience, a future state of rewards and punishments. But when you would inquire how or why these things are so, you instantly find yourself wandering in speculations more dark and cold, than the cheerless course of the mariner on the frozen ocean, where no sun warms the atmosphere, no light directs his course, no needle is true to the pole.

Who can illustrate the dependence of man, show how absolute and universal is this dependence, and then explain the consistency of this with human liberty? Who can display the immediate agency of God, directing all events and all creatures, the sparrow of the field, the prophet in the temple, the murderer on the hill of battle, and the angel of death laying waste the nations, and then show how this is consistent with

the accountability of man, and the hopes of human activity and enterprise. How does spirit influence spirit? How does the divine Spirit influence men or angels? Is the mind excited to action by invincible motives, by moral suasion, or the positive agency of God? Granting either of these suppositions, who can explain its compatibility with moral agency, with praise or blame? The fact I do not deny, but I ask for the lucid illustration.

An oracle may proclaim, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. But can this oracle show, how events could possibly have been different from what they have been, from what they now are, from what they will be? Yet we all believe they might have been different, nor have I selected these doctrines, because I have any doubts respecting them, or to weaken your confidence in their truth or importance. My design has been clearly and forcibly to convince you, how feeble and limited are your highest mental efforts; to convince you, that every man, of every sect or party, believes, devoutly believes doctrines, the consistency of which he cannot explain, the accordance of which with each other he cannot illustrate or confirm. Nor need you be surprised at this. If you do not thoroughly understand human science, why should you expect to fathom heavenly science. If you do not comprehend the things about you, which you see and handle, can you expect to comprehend the "visions of God," the wonders of redemption. If you do not comprehend the stars which you see, nor the world which you inhabit, nor the seeds of your fields, nor your souls, nor your bodies, can you expect

to comprehend the deep things of God, the mysteries of the heavenly world? Can you expect to comprehend God himself?

REFLECTIONS.

I. The subject is a lesson of humility.

Man holds a high rank among the creatures of God. He is little lower than the angels, he can extract the lightning from the clouds, weigh the air, and measure the planets. Man understands facts, but when he proceeds to investigate their cause, or their consistency, he is stopped in his course, or if he proceed, is liable to errour and delusion.

We know that man can do good or evil, and that he is dependent. We know that Jesus Christ is man, and that he is the same yesterday, and for ever, but how these apparently opposite facts are consistent, divines cannot explain, philosophers cannot illustrate, perhaps angels cannot unfold. With all his sublime attainments, man cannot comprehend the movements of his own mind. We know in part, we perceive the mental imbecilities of others, we feel our own, and are humble. Will not the subject silence the boastings of human reason?

II. It is no conclusive objection against a duty or doctrine, that we understand it only in part. Did our first parents fully understand the threatening, "Thou shalt die," or the promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head?" Did the Jews fully understand the nature of the sacrifices, which smoked on their altars, of the angel, who went before them,

of the rock, which quenched their thirst, of the brazen serpent, which healed their wounds? Did the Apostles themselves, for a long time, have any just apprehensions of the Messiah's kingdom, and the nature of that empire he was about to establish over the world?

Why then need we be alarmed, or reject duties or doctrines, merely because we do not fully comprehend them? Who can explain the utility of prayer, which is addressed to an infinite and unchangeable mind? Yet by our feeble researches, we fondly expect to understand all knowledge.

Forgetting our limited powers, forgetting that a spire of grass, or a particle of sand may baffle all our philosophy, we presumptuously attempt to explain the government of God, and the mode of his existence, themes which confound the intellect of the boldest seraph, and silence all the heavenly host.

Some circumstances in creation, some designs of Providence, some portions of revelation, are covered with darkness too profound to be pierced by mortal eyes. We trace the same Author in them all. Why should we not observe the same precaution respecting all? We never deny that stones fall from the clouds, nor that volcanoes blaze, merely because it is unknown whence the stones come, or what feeds those fires. Whatever God has said, may command our faith, without feeling any perplexity respecting its consequence or consistency.

Whatever God reveals, the heavenly hosts believe. Whatever he commands, they obey.

"Nor Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives."

III. The subject presents a most persuasive argument for candour towards those, who cannot understand and believe as we do.

With all our superiour privileges and happy progress, with all our faithfulness, and sincerity, and piety, we know but in part. Yet well aware I am, how suspicious and even odious is such an inference with some zealous Christians. But must good feelings and Christian graces be abandoned, because they happen not to be fashionable?

Have we not fallen on evil times, when the fairest virtue of the Gospel is ridiculed and despised, when candour and charity, the richest blossoms in the garden of God, are trampled under foot as emblems of heresy?—When from the language of some, we might fear, that the precept "Judge not," with the threatening "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged," was unfortunately omitted in the edition of the Bible which they read?

But let all be reminded that the Christian church holds the union of "orthodoxy and charity." Censoriousness and bitterness have been condemned by the most sound writers of the Christian church. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." Saith Dr. Doddridge, "Let the different sects and parties of Christians, study to imbibe more of the equitable and lovely temper, which the apostle expresses in so genuine a manner. The divisions of the church are not to be healed by imposing our sentiments, and phrases, and forms, and censuring, and harassing those who will not acquiesce in them." Dr. Watts says, "This iniquity of uncharitableness has more springs than

there are branches to the great river of Egypt. It is more fruitful of serpents and monsters. Itself is a Hydra of many heads." The wholesome advice of the great Baxter is, "Let him who is wiser, or more orthodox, or godly than others, show it as the Holy Ghost directs. Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom." This deportment may allure others to love the truth, but scowling censoriousness makes no converts. An ugly fiend, she rouses the strongest passions of the community against the truth. She arrays all the prejudices of the public against sound doctrines. She multiplies the advocates of errour. Truth suffers, truth is the victim, when she descends to associate herself with intolerance and spiritual despotism.

Dr. Owen declares, "For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the meantime to call fire from heaven, or fetch it from hell themselves, is to cry 'Hail, Master,' and crucify him afresh."

Archbishop Tillotson remarks, "that uncharitableness is as bad an evidence of a true Christian as one would wish. Damning men is a very hard thing, and whenever it is done, the case should be wonderfully plain." The bishop of Norwich says, "that every penalty, every disability, every restriction, every inconvenience, to which any good civil subject is exposed on the score of his religion, is, in its degree, persecution, because, as Lord Mansfield observed, conscience is not controllable by human laws, nor amenable to human tribunals." Such are the testimonies of our greatest divines.

The spirit of Christianity is forgiving and kind, as the father's heart when running to embrace a long lost son; it is loving and tender, as the sighs of the mother over her expiring babe; it is mild and benevolent, as the whispers of angels to the departing saint. Is that man then a Christian, who judges and condemns his brother, whose tongue is sharper than the adder's sting, who bolts and bars the gate of heaven against all mankind, but himself and his little sect?

We all see through a glass darkly: darkly enough, God knows. We see in part, we know in part. Some see more, some less. Is this any reason why you should contemn, and disturb, and vex, your neighbour? Because an individual or a people are not as understanding as you are, would you withhold from them all sound instruction? If our own knowledge be limited, and imperfect, and obscure, if our opinions are far from being infallible, shall we not sympathize with men groping in darkness, mistaken, and erroneous? You perceive a mote in their eye, possibly, *possibly*, a beam is in your own eye. Have they not a claim on your Christian sympathy, your tender compassion.

Let the man, who is sure that God has revealed his secrets to him, despise his weaker, humbler brethren, and arraign them before his bar; but let him first show, in words which cannot be mistaken, that he, exclusively, understands the oracles of God, that he is authorized to reduce us to his opinions. Then will we bow to his spiritual authority.

But will any man who has known the terrours of the Lord, who, perplexed with uncertainty, has de-

voutly and humbly laboured to understand the truths of revelation, who has been oppressed with fears lest he himself should fall into fatal errours, will *he* judge and condemn his brother, and call him, for whom Christ died, by hard and bitter names? Has he the charity which hopeth all things, that believeth all things, and endureth all things? Or has he the pagan pride, which kindled the fire of Babylon's furnace? Is he not guided by that terrific blaze, unconscious of the gentle star, which led the wise men to Bethlehem?

We are now worms, grovelling in darkness; we are birds of the night, averting our eyes from the splendours of moral day. Soon we shall drop these tenements of clay, and rise, and soar, and mingle with patriarchs and prophets. We shall there, at the footstool of the Eternal, learn the wonders of immortality. There, in the society of the redeemed, robed in light, and in the immediate presence of God himself, we shall advance in knowledge, till we reach the present attainments of David, and Daniel, and Isaiah, who have been for thousands of years in the school of heaven. We shall then more rapidly advance, till we acquire the present wisdom and understanding of Gabriel, and the highest seraphs around the throne. We shall still advance, and leave the present attainments of the highest angels as far behind, as those angels are before the weeping babe of yesterday. Then how low, how miserable, will our present attainments appear. Who will not then exclaim, 'How could I indulge pride and self-exultation, how could I reproach the errours of my

neighbour, when my own views were so feeble, so confused?"

We know in part. Our own conduct and attainments demand the candour and charity of our friends. Shall not we then manifest that charity which covereth a multitude of sins? The Saviour himself is touched with the infirmities of our imperfect brethren. Shall mortal man be more severe than his Maker? Shall we not all rather, like our divine Saviour, who freely associated with all the sects and tribes of Israel, do good to all men, as we have opportunity.

SERMON X.

JEREMIAH xvii, 9.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

As the benevolent physician would wish never to administer a remedy which is unpleasant, so the sympathetic preacher would gladly be excused from publishing any doctrine which is offensive, any duty which is unacceptable. But as the guardians of your health are compelled by love and humanity, to recommend medicines bitter to the taste, so the ministers of the cross find themselves called, by the voice of compassion and tenderness, to proclaim doctrines painful and alarming.

Such was the situation of the good prophet. It became his duty to tell the house of Israel their sins, to proclaim to the world their depravity. This was not a description of this or that unprincipled individual, but of the whole race. Not merely their immoral actions, but their hearts, the fountains of action, are "desperately wicked." A doctrine always admitted

with reluctance, and often repelled with force, with talents, and learning. A thousand plausible and pleasant things have been said, to wipe away the stain. As well may you wash the Ethiopian white, or efface the leopard's spots.

My object is to enforce the lesson of the text, that the heart of man is exceedingly wicked.

I shall not appeal to passages of Scripture which support this doctrine, although I believe them numerous and conclusive. They are before you to be consulted at pleasure; they daily offer you light and conviction; they are familiar to your minds.

Neither do I appeal to the history of man, though this would furnish incontrovertible evidence of the doctrine. While orthodox divines have incurred the odium of being the chief heralds of man's depravity, the historians of the world may claim a full share of the labour. Their pages are crowded with proofs that the heart of man is "desperately wicked." Their records of violated treaties, of bloody wars, captivities, and victories, demonstrate how deep, how malignant is the poison of human depravity. Before the pulpit is reproached for portraying the wickedness of man, let the voice of history be silenced, destroy the records of ancient and modern days, erase from the annals of the world the tales of ambition, and revenge, of wars, and revolutions.

Neither shall I attempt to carry you in imagination to the wilderness, to survey savage manners and morals, to see them torture their captives, eat the flesh, or drink the blood of the slain. We will not approach the camps and prisons of the world, to hear their

blasphemies, or witness the vices of men, in their gross and hideous forms.

Indeed I am at a loss what proofs to adduce. They are so numerous, so complete, that a more prudent man might well doubt which to choose, or where to begin. The mind is bewildered with their multitude, and rather labours to select those which are not hackneyed, than to find those which are conclusive.

To prevent all degrading comparisons, all uncandid representations, I will summon my witnesses from the reputable part of society. If, in this mode of procedure, evidence of deep depravity forces itself upon us, the doctrine must stand on a basis immoveable.

I. Is it not a proof of human depravity that a constant series of efforts are necessary to maintain a pure and holy course of conduct?

Were the heart good, free from the poison of sin, would it require any self-denial, any effort to be dutiful, obedient, and holy? I speak not of those who commit iniquity with greediness, who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, who cannot cease from sin, but of the more sound and decorous portion of society. Is it any reproach to the pure and excellent of the earth to suppose, that they make some effort to be good and holy? I ask you who are fathers in the church, you who are mothers in Israel, whether some watchfulness, some irksome self-denial, be not requisite, to maintain a pure conscience, to live soberly, and righteously, and piously? Must you not be ever on your guard, ever attentive, sometimes resolute, not to wound your consciences? Does it

not require some fixedness of purpose, to turn away from an alluring temptation? Like Lot's wife, do you not sometimes cast back a lingering look? What is the unavoidable inference from this? That you are perfect? That you are equally disposed to good as to evil? Or that the leaven of wickedness has deeply penetrated your heart? You are, I charitably believe, a sincere follower of Jesus Christ, you are gentle, and kind, and devout. You are a blessing to your friends, and an ornament of human nature. But how came you thus? Is all this self command natural and easy? Have you always moved spontaneously along the narrow path of life? Have you no selfish, worldly, vain, wicked thoughts and passions to govern, to resist, to subdue? Do not your wayward passions call you to resistance and exertion, as if you were running a race, or carrying on a warfare? Are you not required to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, and the whole armour of God? Is not this needful? Are not your different desires and passions like the company of two armies? Have not all former saints found these to be sober facts? Did not prophets and apostles call on the people to "gird up their loins," "to run," "to fight," "to crucify their passions?" Does not this prove man to be a fallen, sinful, depraved creature? Were you not sinful, were not your heart desperately wicked, it would be as easy to be good, to love and serve God, as to breathe, to sleep, and eat, and love the world. Every effort to be good, every struggle, every painful act of self-denial, proves the heart of man to be desperately wicked.

II. Is it not proof of great wickedness in the heart, that worldly good is pursued with so much more constancy and zeal, than spiritual? Need I adduce any proof that the pleasures of this world command more attention, than the hopes and glories of the world to come? But is this reasonable or right? Does it not argue a depraved state of heart? A few individuals may have been as much engaged to promote their own salvation, and the glory of God, as the worldly man is to secure temporal good. The prophets, and apostles, and a host of martyrs may be enrolled in this catalogue. A vast multitude, in every age, pursue spiritual good, or a course of religious duty, with a laudable degree of zeal and perseverance. They build churches, they support the gospel, they do good in a thousand ways. But when have you seen men universally or generally thus engaged? When have you seen them as much engaged, and acting with the same invincible energy, in a course of religious duty, as in some worldly pursuit? When have you seen worldly men as much engaged to support the gospel, as to enrich themselves? As much concerned to make their calling and election sure, as to prosecute some promising speculation? As anxious to enjoy spiritual consolation, as sensual pleasure? For worldly advantages, they can devote their thoughts, their conversation, their ease, their health, labour all the day, watch all the night. But when have you seen men thus engaged in the work of salvation? Here they are cool, careless, inconstant. Yet will they acknowledge that spiritual good is infinitely the most important, that worldly good is

vanity and a bubble. Does not this evince a deep rooted and malignant depravity, that the heart is desperately wicked?

III. It argues a bad state of the heart, that mankind are more fruitful in expedients to obtain worldly good, than spiritual.

Men of the world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light. You are not unfrequently surprised at the fertility of invention, the sageness and perspicuity displayed by men for the attainment of their object. The warriour is prolific in stratagems, the philosopher in experiments, the merchant in devising new avenues of wealth. The skill manifested in navigation, manufactures, and the arts, often astonishes those unacquainted with those arts. Under the guidance of a trembling needle, the mariner traverses every ocean, explores every coast, visits every island and port. Man dives into the bowels of the mountains, and returns loaded with their silver, and gold, and gems; he commands the fire, the wind, and water, and vapour of water, to execute his labour, to minister to his pleasures. But when, and where, and by whom, has such skill been displayed in the attainment of spiritual good? By whom has such fertility of resource been exhibited, in reducing to exact rules, the art of self control, of right conduct, of holy living? Man commands the cattle on a thousand hills; the elements, the rivers, the sun, moon, and stars, are his servants. He bids the marble breathe, the canvass move with life, but how seldom are these the agents to promote his virtues, to cultivate his Christian graces? Although God is

abundantly manifest in these works, yet the world by this wisdom has never known Him, his being, or perfections; has never discovered any rational system of worship, or faith, or practice. Does not this demonstrate their extreme depravity? The learned Greeks were no more moral, no more rational, in their worship, than the barbarous Scythians. The refined Athenians had a religion no more rational, than the uncouth Bœotians. Men are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. Is not the evidence irresistible that the wickedness of man is great?

IV. Human depravity is evinced by the fact, that powerful means of moral improvement produce little effect.

Through life, men are invited, and urged, and commanded, to be good. Does not this single circumstance decide the question respecting their moral character? Do men need to be urged to what is natural? Do you warn, or exhort men to eat or sleep?

The immense moral culture bestowed on men, with the very imperfect result generally produced, proclaims the depravity of the heart, in language not to be misunderstood. That man is made wicked by evil examples, is one of the most fallacious apologies to palliate crimson guilt. Would wicked example, would false instruction, poison pure minds? Did they leave a stain on the heart or life of the Saviour?

But whence come wicked examples, and false instructions? Must they not have originated in the native depravity of man? So far from borrowing

their wickedness, exclusively, from wicked examples, men sin spontaneously, and in opposition to an immense force of moral influence and instruction. Hardly is it conceivable, what is done for the improvement of man, from the cradle to the grave. Even in heathen nations, and among savage tribes, the influence of education is not inconsiderable. The worst system of superstition and idolatry, is less injurious than cold and cheerless atheism. Some crimes are punished, some vices are suppressed, some moral virtues are inculcated, much possible evil is prevented.

But in a civilized, Christian country, the machinery of education is immensely extensive, various, and powerful. Its numerous engines move with a force, I had almost said, irresistible. Irresistible they would be, were not the heart of man desperately wicked.

For a moment consider the amount of instruction afforded a person in a Christian country. While on his mother's breast, rays of moral light begin to dispel the darkness from his mind. Soon his mind is enriched with prayers and hymns, and catechisms, and moral narratives. Soon he consults the word of God, he listens to the gospel of salvation, instructions daily press on his mind, from year to year.

The light of truth is constant, like the shining of the sun and stars. By day, by night, at home, abroad, heavenly monitors accompany him. Sometimes the success is, in a good degree, answerable. The mind is enlightened, and elevated, and sanctified. It is but little lower than the angels. Yet generally, how unsatisfactory, how partial, how imperceptible is the effect from these multiplied modes of religious instruc-

tion. In most instances, do not these persons so highly favoured, remain worldly, vain, wicked, in their temper and conduct.

Though doctrines have been so often explained, their minds remain confused; though duties have been so often urged, they are neglected; though repentance and faith have been so often enjoined, they remain unbelieving and impenitent; though the character of Jesus Christ has been recommended, they have none of his virtues.

Should the sculptor labour day after day to shape and polish a block of marble, and it yet remain rough and shapeless, would you not believe it hard and unyielding? If such immense labour be expended on the human character, to enlighten the mind, to soften and sanctify the heart, while so little is generally effected, must you not conclude that the heart is desperately wicked, hard as the nether millstone? While you witness so much resistance to the powerful voice of religious truth, must you not infer, are you not compelled to believe, that the human character is radically depraved, that men hate the light?

Must you not plead for the Scriptural account of man, that he has destroyed himself, that he is an enemy to God, a child of wrath, destitute of holiness, of all moral good, entirely sinful? Why else is so much moral culture lost? Why does Scripture require him to be a new creature? Why else may he not apply the gracious promises of the gospel to himself, made to the least degree of goodness? Why are no concessions made to his moral purity in the

day of judgment? Is not the race of man desperately wicked, entirely depraved?

V. The general conformity of moral character among individuals of the same profession, combined with their want of conformity to the divine law, is evidence of human depravity.

The fact has too much notoriety to require proof. That seamen and soldiers have a general resemblance of morals, that clergy and laity have an appropriate moral complexion, will not readily be questioned. Does not this indicate that each section has established some ideal standard of duty, some artificial rule of conduct, to which they accommodate themselves? Hence these classes, while they maintain a known conformity of character, when associated together, yet strikingly differ in different countries and divisions of the same calling. Sailors in the navy and the fisheries exhibit a marked difference of moral character. The clergy of the different sects may sometimes be readily recognized. Here is further evidence of an ideal standard, that of popular opinion, or fashion, or habit. Were all governed by the love and fear of God, did all strive exclusively to observe the law of God, did they fix their eyes on this law, and not on rules of their own forming, they might as easily obey the law of God, as the rules of their society. They would be more happy, for the ways of wisdom are pleasant.

Did all scrupulously consult the same standard, the difference of moral character, in the various sects and professions of society, would in a degree pass away.

The dialect of the ship and the pulpit would be less discordant, integrity would not avoid the mart of traffic, nor seek an asylum in the shade of obscurity. All having the same star to direct their course, their progress, allowing for their different advantages and abilities, would correspond.

Does not this kind of conventional morality, in the various sections of society, argue that they are not governed by the principles of piety and duty? Others are satisfied with them, and they are satisfied with themselves. So much moral character is necessary for a mariner, so much for an attorney, or a merchant, and so much they have. Generally they graduate their conduct to the scale of popular demand, with great accuracy. Infamous delinquencies, in any profession, are rare. While the popular standard of duty is not grossly violated, conscience is quiet. The individual pleads, "if I am not pious or moral like many others, I am as good as those of my own calling or profession, and therefore not liable to reproach." Is not this, substituting opinion for the will of God? Is it not to regard man more than God? Is it not casting off the fear of God? Does it not argue that the heart is "desperately wicked?"

VI. The terrible punishment which, in the general judgment, will be inflicted on the impenitent, is proof of extreme wickedness in the heart of man.

Great pains have been taken to disprove this doctrine. Powerful talents have been exerted to show that, in the original of the scriptures, no such place as hell has been named. Whether the place be named or not, the thing is most evident. "Some shall awake

to everlasting shame and contempt." The wicked will be "cast into a lake of fire." But particular texts need not be cited. The doctrine is conspicuous on the whole page of revelation. Two classes of men are every-where exhibited, the different treatment which they receive from God is constantly kept in view. The Judge himself has left us a particular and affecting description of the last solemn scene, when every man will be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. All mankind will be divided into two classes, the holy and the unholy. The wicked must depart into everlasting fire, "where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched." This punishment is not confined to enormous offenders, to murderers, and warriours drunk with the blood of the slain, but includes all who are not the benevolent followers of the Lamb, who did not feed the hungry, visit the sick, or clothe the naked. Surely their sins must be dreadful, their hearts must be desperately wicked, or they would not be consigned to the vengeance of eternal fire. No doctrine of the gospel is more important, none more essential. Unless men are convinced of their lost estate, they cannot feel their need, nor accept the offer, of divine mercy; unless they do accept gospel mercy, they cannot be saved.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We learn the duty of candour towards the faults and sins of others.

We survey our fellow-men, we observe our friends, we soon perceive that they are not perfect, not what we should desire, not what they ought to be. We

lament their faults. This is right. But sometimes contempt or wrath is kindled. We magnify their guilt, and condemn them as worthless, or odious. If they have injured us, we pour on them the full vials of our indignation. But is this proper, wise, or just? Are not we in the same condemnation? Are we not sinners? Does not He, who searches the heart and knows all our actions, see more iniquity in us, than we have witnessed in the greatest offender? Do not we know as much iniquity in ourselves, as in the man we so unmercifully condemn? Are we not sometimes humbled, and abased, and confounded, by our own conduct? Shall we not then be candid to others? Can we see the faults of others, and not feel our own? All have a mote in their eye. All have sinned. Is it reasonable for men, convicted of the same guilt, condemned by the same law, at the mercy of the same judge, and exposed to the same punishment, to be censorious and cruel? We do not always regulate our thoughts and desires, govern our passions, or perform those actions our conscience approves. Yet we expect the candour of our friends, we expect them to put a kind construction on our questionable or mysterious conduct. They also are imperfect and depraved. They have an equal claim on our candour and kindness. Shall it be withheld? Let us agree to endure each other's imperfections, to cover each other's faults with the mantle of silent charity.

II. Let us learn from this subject to be diffident, and jealous of ourselves.

Can you depend on your sincerity and perseverance to accomplish your best purposes? Many have for a

season bid fair for the kingdom of heaven, and yet have fallen away never to be renewed. With all your present good resolutions, may you not transgress with a bold face and a daring hand, disappoint yourselves and your best friends? Solomon has said, and well he knew, that "he who trusteth his own heart is a fool." You may as well expect the sea to be always smooth, the sun always to shine, the wind ever to be gentle, as that your own heart will be always in a serious and rational temper.

When you murmur at the absolute government of God, at the strictness of his law, at the character given of man, or at the dreadful punishment of sin, are you sure the evil is not in your own heart? The prisoner at the bar, under sentence of death, seldom entertains a high opinion of the law, of the judge, or the witnesses. But is he a competent authority? Does any one believe him impartial, candid, or just? This is precisely our situation. A sinful world are under sentence of the judge. He has pronounced them guilty, desperately wicked, daring criminals. They are liable every moment to be arrested, and cast into the lake of fire.

All men recoil from what lessens and degrades them. It is therefore not strange, that they often dispute, resist, and reject this account of themselves. But are they not too deeply interested to judge correctly? Are they not under a corrupt influence? Are they not violently tempted to justify themselves, to "contemn God," and "to speak stout words?" So situated, ought they to have much confidence in their own opinions on moral subjects?

It would to them seem more rational, more honourable to God, were man less depraved, and sin a less evil, and the punishment less dreadful, and the divine wrath more placable. But would it not, on the same principle, appear better still, better for man, and more glorious to God, were there no sin, no punishment, no anger of God; yet these, in some degree, certainly do exist. We know we endure them. They torture our souls, make our eyes weep, our hearts bleed. Can we be adequate judges of the evil of sin, of the punishment most suitable to be inflicted, of the just intensity and duration of the divine anger?

The very circumstance that we are offenders, that God has charged us with being desperate offenders, should excite self-jealousy, should lead us to abandon our confidence in our own wisdom, and to wait and hear what God has said in his word. This we should believe, without opposing our wishes, our opinions, to the doctrines revealed, or the duties commanded. Let God be true, and his word be received as irresistible authority, while we cultivate a humble jealousy of our own religious views, of our fidelity and wisdom.

III. The subject teaches us that the gospel must be glad tidings of great joy.

We are sinners under condemnation, every moment exposed to endless misery. In this situation, while trembling under the terrours of divine wrath, and hiding ourselves from God, the gospel finds us. The gospel offers pardon, offers to deliver us from the pit of ruin. It does more, it proffers the spirit of adoption, promises to make us children and heirs of God, promises us glory and immortal life. Who, that pos-

sesses the reflection and sensibility of a rational being, does not hear the strains of gospel mercy with thanksgiving and raptures of holy joy. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden" is good news from a far country, is liberty to the captive, health to the sick, life to the dying. Those who hear the joyful sound are the favourites of providence. You he treats as the children of his watchful care. He has not done the same for all people. He passes by the heathen world, they are left in moral darkness. For you the Morning Star rises, the Sun of Righteousness shines. To you God seems to say, "You only have I known."

Is it possible that any should reject the merciful Saviour, while you hear him saying, "What more could I have done, that I have not done."—"In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Is it possible that any should resist the Holy Spirit, when he comes to be their comforter in distress, their sanctifier, and teacher? Is it possible so to harden the heart, as to resist the light of truth, and reject the salvation offered? Are not gospel privileges invaluable? Do you not believe them so? Is it possible for you to refuse your faith and obedience, and render your state more dreadful than that of the heathen? Shall it be more tolerable for Tyre, and Sidon, for Sodom, and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment than for you? Rather raise your thoughts and desires to the heavenly world. Say in the language of piety, As for me, I will serve the Lord!

"Happy is the man who findeth wisdom, and the man who getteth understanding."

SERMON XI.

ZECHARIAH iv, 6.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

Reading the volume of civil history, we are amused, or instructed, or charmed, with the activity, the enterprize, or intelligence of man. By his labours and wisdom, fields are loaded with harvests, science and art exhibit their wonders, society is organized, legislators exhibit all that we can imagine of greatness and grandeur. Here the story ends. But when we open the volume of revelation, another scene is presented. God, the infinite spirit, is the first object, angels are seen descending and ascending, to execute the orders of his throne. Him we behold, creating the world, weighing the mountains, and balancing the stars. We see him disposing of men. They are blest or miserable, rich or poor, wise or powerful, by his guiding providence; legislators and conquerors are merely the instruments of his purposes, moral machinery under his direction.

At the time of this prophecy, the rebuilding of Jerusalem had been suspended. Artaxerxes had gone to his fathers, and Darius was on the throne. Fearing they should not obtain his consent to renew the work, opposition rising, and some saying, "the time is not come that the Lord's house should be built," the people were discouraged. To revive their hopes, a revelation is made to Zechariah. The word of the Lord to Zerubbabel was, "Who art thou, great mountain, before him?" Though the obstacles in his way are as mountains, they shall become a plain. The work shall proceed, though not by human might or power. Your father's deliverance from Egypt was accompanied with miraculous displays; the winds blew, the sea opened, Pharaoh and his host were destroyed. They entered Canaan in triumph. The sun and moon stood still, Jordan stopped to gaze at the grandeur of their march, the walls of Jericho trembled and fell, flying javelins dazzled the eye, clouds of arrows darkened the air. But now the whole process of your deliverance is different. Cyrus was insensibly inclined by the Spirit of God to restore you to your country. Darius will be disposed by the same spirit, to revive the work of finishing the temple and city, the people will be devoutly disposed to labour. The walls will rise, the temple will be completed. As the top stone is laid, you will shout, "grace, grace."

Doctrine. All the blessings of life, are effected by the Spirit of God.

I. The Spirit of God bestows on men their intellectual powers.

This is exclusively his work. Men are as dependent for their mental capacity, as the marble for the form which it receives from the sculptor. Unless men can act before their existence, they can have no agency in their original powers of mind. These are precisely what their Maker pleases to give. As in grace, so in capacity, one man differs from another, as one star surpasses another in splendour. He, who formed the mountains with various degrees of magnitude and grandeur, has given to human minds different degrees of elevation and power. Some are feeble, incapable of continued attention, and groveling in their disposition. Others, on a strong wing, soar above their fellows, discovering truths hidden from ages, opening new sources of wonder and rational delight. This mental vigour is from God. If he withdraw his Spirit, the most sublime intellect is deprived of its power, the most splendid genius is destroyed. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth men understanding." Whenever scripture alludes to the display of remarkable powers, these powers are ascribed to the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God came upon Sampson, and he displayed prodigies of valour. David declares that God taught his hands to war.

This influence of the Spirit does not necessarily imply gracious or holy exercises. It is as truly the Spirit of God, who gives us our intellectual and physical powers, as the graces of a pious heart. He, that in the fields of science or business rises above his fellows, and occasionally above himself, is as really the subject of divine influence, as was St. Paul at Damascus, or Isaiah, when he announced himself

anointed of God. The gifts are different, the giver is the same. The same Spirit which elevated the mind of Newton to investigate the physical laws of the universe, inspired Peter with penitential sorrow to weep for his sins. Our mental power is from the Spirit of God.

II. Men are indebted to the Spirit of God for that peculiar texture of mind, which is congenial with liberal improvement.

For this, mere strength or extent of capacity is not always sufficient. The most vigorous powers may be disposed to exhaust themselves in active courage or arduous enterprise. A particular complexion of mind, and circumstances which are often beyond control, are necessary for high intellectual attainments. It may therefore well be said "God giveth men wisdom and knowledge." In scripture, declarations of this kind are numerous. God said to Solomon, "Wisdom and knowledge are granted unto thee." 'I give you these blessings.' Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth, not only in opulence, but in wisdom. All the kings of the earth sought unto Solomon, to hear his wisdom that *God had put in his heart.*" This is equally true of other wise men as of Solomon. That power of attention, that strength of memory, that penetration, and discernment, that leisure, and command of other means necessary for eminent intellectual attainments, are the gift of God.

In almost every age, a few sublime minds, like Enoch and Elijah, ascending to heaven without passing through the territories of death, soar above other men in science, knowledge, and goodness, while we

who are souls of ordinary mould, so far from being competitors in their ascent, are unable to follow in the track which they mark, or to comprehend the mysteries which they reveal. Like Elisha, we gaze with admiration, exclaiming, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" These men shed light on all the walks of life, they raise the character of man, they preserve us from ignorance and errour, they swell the tide of human felicity, they are the benefactors and the ornaments of the world. These are men whom God delights to honour, whom he has stamped with greatness, whom he has irradiated by his Spirit.

Of Bezaleel God says, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." What was this distinguished gift of heaven? Was it luminous piety? Was it skill in government, or eminence as a minister of God? It was chiefly "to work in gold, and silver, and brass, and cutting stones, and carving timber," mere manual labours. In all those who laboured in these arts, God says "I have put wisdom." In another place, Moses repeats this doctrine; "The Lord put wisdom in their hearts." The ordinary and eminent attainments of the mind are from the Spirit of the Lord.

III. Convictions of sin and a new heart are from the Spirit of God.

This doctrine is so popular as to require little confirmation. "The Spirit of God leads the mind into all truth." Those who believe on his name are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God." "He saves us by the renewing of the

Holy Ghost." It is the appropriate work of the Holy Spirit to convince men of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. He enlightens, convinces, and renews, the heart. When the first serious thought arises in the mind, the Holy Spirit is the author of that thought. When the conscience is enlightened and convinced, and the man becomes habitually serious, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. As truth continues to operate, and conviction increases, and the soul in anguish inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," here is more decisive evidence that the Holy Spirit has commenced a work of power. Divested of its own righteousness, humbled, and penitent, the soul displays the blessed operations of the divine Spirit.

IV. The progressive advance of holiness in the hearts of men is effected by the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification is a gradual process; but while the man is active, he is not independent; he is clay formed, by the Spirit of God, to be a vessel of honour. While he is voluntary, and rouses his best powers to run the Christian race, he finds the path narrow, and obstructed by many difficulties and dangers. To day, fields and blossoms delight his senses, and gardens of fruit open their treasures to allure him from his course; tomorrow, a labyrinth of distress, a slough of despondence, discourage his exertions, and freeze his heart with a thousand terrours. Painful crosses, enchanting pleasures, worldly affections, violent passions, assail the Christian in his way to heaven. The progress of holiness is an arduous labour, a painful conflict, a dangerous

warfare. Mere human power is unequal to the conflict; yet the Christian conquers, not by might or power; but by the Spirit of God. To his people God says, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring; and they shall spring up, as willows by the water courses." Others shall take knowledge of them, that they have the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit sent to be their Comforter.

Isaiah teaches the same doctrine. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.

Here, the Spirit of God produces a spirit of grace and sanctification, a spirit of prayer, and holy communion with God, a spirit of mourning and godly sorrow for sin. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As the good man advances in life, he learns more of himself, of his earthly disposition, of his inordinate self-love, of his distance from God, of his absolute dependance, of his constant danger of sin and ruin, and he becomes more devout, more humble, more penitent, more holy. The longer he lives, the more various his trials and blessings, he has more adequate views of sin, its evil nature, and dreadful tendency; of course he has more profound apprehensions of divine mercy, and the love of God in giving his Son to die for sinners, of the excellency and preciousness of the Saviour, of the im-

portance and necessity of the gospel. This leads him to prize, and love the word and ordinances of the gospel. The word of the Lord is sweeter than honey, dropping from the comb. The Sabbath is his delight, and he exclaims "When shall I come and appear before God." "A day in thine house is better than a thousand, I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." "How amiable are thy tabernacles." His daily prayer is, "Lead me not into temptation." "Keep back thy servant from secret sins." Such a temper is from the Spirit of God; such a heart is a temple of the Holy Ghost; he dwells in such a soul. As the waters of the sanctuary cleansed and purified the victim and the priest; so the Holy Spirit sanctifies the heart, and prepares it for glory.

V. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all our *success* in the affairs of this world.

The prosperity of Israel is by Isaiah ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He, therefore, says "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be accounted for a forest." Whether this be considered literal or figurative, whether it indicate spiritual or worldly prosperity, the general lesson of instruction is the same. In either case the Holy Spirit is the author of the good enjoyed. If your graces bud and blossom, and you bear fruit like the garden of the Lord; or if your fields are fruitful, and loaded with abundant harvests, so that your former cultivation shall appear like a forest, all this temporal or spiritual progress is from the Spirit of God.

For a moment recollect what things are necessary to ensure success, and then ask thy heart, if it does not depend on the grace of God. Select the acquisition of property. Can a man feel sanguine of wealth, unless his plans and pursuits are contrived with judgment and discretion? How many things are destroyed for want of judgment.

Must not faithful partners, or assistants be obtained. The affairs of Potiphar prospered, while Joseph was his servant. Laban advanced in wealth, while Jacob was his partner. The means of your expected wealth must be in demand, or your hopes will be blasted.

After all these advantages, and the highest success, which may follow, if the man have not prudence and judgment to retain what he has acquired, to vest or use his acquisitions in a judicious manner, he has laboured only for the wind; he will reap the whirlwind. Are not all these blessings from the Spirit of God? Whence comes the prudence or discretion of man, in executing the common business of life? Who instructs the ploughman and artisan? Is it not the Spirit of God? Is it not he, "who turns the hearts" of men to love us, to be faithful in our business? Did he not influence Jacob, and Joseph, and David? Is it not he, who gives peace and wealth, to a neighbourhood or nation, so that business flourishes, so that men are encouraged to labour in their calling, and find success in their various enterprises? A certain degree of civilization, and general wealth, are necessary, that the artisan may find employment, that the merchant may dispose of his goods, the husbandman of his provisions. Change the face of society, or the habits of

the people, and you close the avenues to wealth and prosperity. Sampson had valour and physical strength to acquire fame and glory. Haman had skill and address to obtain wealth and power, and the confidence of his king. But the Spirit of God did not give them wisdom to retain and enjoy their lofty eminence, they fell, to rise no more. Instead of being, on the whole, prosperous or happy men, they stand as dry trees in the field, scorched by the lightning of heaven, numbered among the most unfortunate and miserable of the human race.

The life of Joseph was a course of splendid achievements, a path of radiant glory; but did he for this lean on the strength of his own arm, or was he guided by mental energy of his own production, or by grace and sanctity of heart, which he did not receive? By what means did he obtain such an ascendency in the house of his master, that the domestic cares rested on him, that the business was transacted by him, that his master did not examine his conduct? The sacred historian distinctly informs us, "the Lord was with Joseph; the Lord made all that he did to prosper?"

More remarkable was his success at the prison. Accused of an odious crime, treated according to the severity of the law, his feet galled with irons, what has he to hope; yet in the *prison*, he soon has the management of affairs, and is the overseer of the prisoners. This mystery is unfolded when we read, that still, "the Lord was with Joseph, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Nothing is too hard for God. He can raise Joseph from a dungeon to the steps of the throne, and Daniel

from a den of lions, to the highest honours of Babylon. All our success comes from God.

VI. The comfort and felicity, which you enjoy in your acquirements, come from God.

A man may possess incalculable treasures and not enjoy them. "A man, to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his heart, of all that he desireth; yet sometimes, God giveth him not power to eat thereof. "Every man, to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is the gift of God.* The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. As Christ was the comfort of his disciples while on earth; so the Holy Spirit now is. The Saviour makes this a reason for his departure, that otherwise the Holy Spirit would not come, as if he were more than a substitute for his presence. "Blessed be God, the God of all comfort." "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. All consolation is from the Spirit of God. The most splendid wealth, the most powerful friends, the most exalted fame, with the richest stream of sensual delights, with the most elevated privileges for intellectual and religious improvement, unless God bless them, will leave the heart cold, and cheerless, and dead.

Did the money of Gehazi comfort his heart? Was he happier for his bags of silver, and his changes of garments? The leprosy was in his silver, the poison of death in his garments. Was Ahab, or Haman happy in their numerous children, or ample posses-

sions? In the proud palace, and at a royal banquet, one hears the sentence of death, the other pines and sickens for his neighbour's vineyard, and instead of being crowned with victory, is borne dying from the field of battle?

Was Balaam blest, while the fame of his wisdom was sounding among distant tribes? Was the king of Babylon blest, in the splendour of his capital, or the adulation of his power? Was Solomon blest in his palaces, and pools, and gardens, and orchards, and vineyards; his silver, his gold, his music, his wine, and his women? Did he not hate the works of his hands?

The wisdom, which secures felicity in the favours of providence, is from the spirit of God. The depth saith, "It is not in me," and the sea saith, "not with me." It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price. Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding. Destruction and death say, "We have heard the fame thereof with our ears." "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding." These graces are from the Spirit of God.

To prevent mistake I may briefly inquire, by what *means* the Spirit of God confers these favours upon men. Men are not moved as the wheels of a watch, by physical force; they do not flourish as the lily of the valley, or cedar of Lebanon, without choice or agency of their own. The work of the Holy Spirit is not intended to supersede our own endeavours; but

to give life, and energy, and success to those endeavours, producing such results as divine wisdom has appointed.

Sometimes God blesses men, by directing and giving efficacy to their endeavours, beyond their power or intention. Still they are the means of their own felicity. The apostles were called to high stations in the church, while sitting in their office, or mending their nets, unconscious of any approaching change, not aspiring to honour, nor expecting new employments; yet they were in their place, in the way of blessings. David was called home from the pasture, where he was doing his duty, contented with his harp, and his flock, to be anointed king of Israel. Joseph was led through a dreary path, to roll in affluence, decked with honours, the benefactor of his father's house, of the country, and the church of God.

In her simplicity, a little captive maid in the family of Naaman, said, "Would God, my lord were with the prophet, that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." Her words are repeated; a message is sent to the king of Israel; the military chieftain repairs to the prophet; he is healed; he becomes a convert to the true faith, and the glory of Israel's God is extended into Syria. In many instances of divine favours which I have mentioned, great effects result from common or trivial causes. Had the Arabian caravan arrived at the field of Dothan only a few hours sooner, Joseph would not have been there; had it come a few hours later, he might not have been alive. All the wonderful consequences of

his agency to his family, to Egypt, and the world, seem to be suspended on a trivial, contingent event.

But the Spirit of God more generally blesses men according to their manifest diligence, their discretion, perseverance, and fidelity. This is the general law of divine procedure, that every one receives "according to his works." "The diligent hand maketh rich." "That which Joseph did, the Lord made it to prosper." "What a man soweth, that shall he reap." Every man assumes the complexion of his own character, chooses his own course, carves his own portion, secures his own reward. The measure of our sincerity, of our faithfulness, and wisdom, is the general measure of our success, and of our felicity. In those instances where the sovereignty of God seems to exclude not only all merit, but all worth or agency of men, it may possibly be found, that their character, what they are, and what they do, has more influence than is generally supposed. God blesses men, by first making them good or wise, to prepare them for subsequent favours, and to render them the instruments of their own felicities. Joseph has been mentioned; but after all the interpositions of providence, and the displays of divine sovereignty, in his behalf, may it not be said, that the conduct, or personal worth of the man, was the germ of his flourishing honours? Piety was the basis of his reputation and success. His innocence in his master's house, his integrity in prison, secured the divine favour, and the inspiration of wisdom. Hence his capacity of explaining mysteries; hence his fame, his power, his riches, his greatness.

REFLECTIONS.

I. From the subject I infer the folly and wickedness of excusing ourselves from any particular duty, merely because the Holy Spirit has not excited us to the performance.

The dependance of man is universal. The government of God is universal. If you excuse yourself from one duty, on account of your dependence, you may from another, and from all duty. If you justify yourself on this principle, for not repenting, believing, or "making yourself a new heart," you may, with the same reason, for neglecting to labour, to speak the truth, or to perform the common duties of humanity. It is the Spirit of God instructs and inclines "the ploughman to turn the furrows, to break the clods, and cast in the seed." Can the slothful man, then, excuse himself for suffering his vineyard to be "overgrown with thorns, and nettles, and the stone wall to be broken down?" Neither can you, for your impenitence and unbelief. To cultivate his land he needs the influence of the Holy Spirit, as really as you. He is as dependent as you are, for a disposition to perform his duty. If dependence be an excuse, the slothful man is as innocent as you.

The dependence of man, and the universal agency of God, are the two great pillars of Revelation; they do not excuse men from any duty. They are accountable for all their conduct.

II. We learn why, contrary to seeming probability, and general expectation, men of eminence often rise from the humble walks of life.

Men do not always wait for wealth, or patronage, or education, to raise them to the pinnacle of human glory or excellence. Bezaleel, the eminent artist, Amos the prophet, Peter the apostle, David the king, rose from the obscure paths of life to eminence and fame. Many in every age have reason to exclaim, with David, "Is it a light matter in your eyes to be son-in-law to a king? As for me, I am a man of humble condition, and not entitled to honour."*

Many of that constellation of great men, who are enlightening the present age, rose to their present distinction, without patronage, without a liberal education, through poverty, and toil, and distressing discouragements. Had the question been submitted to the votes of the community, some other individuals would have been selected. Reviews and critics would gladly have assigned the wreath of honour to other heads; but the work was of God; he chooses whom he will to honour. Laborious mechanics, dwellers in the valley of obscurity, strangers to science, are illumined by the Spirit of God, are raised above their fellows, to shine as stars of splendour, while many nobles and princes are forgotten or unknown.

On the same principle the success of the gospel is often so different from the expectations of its friends. Men are wont to expect improvement from the gospel, according to the genius, or science, the fidelity, or talents, of their spiritual guide; but these gifts may be as the sun shining on the desert, producing no fruit; while the labours of an ordinary mind, seem to

* Septuagint.

enjoy the rain and dew of heaven, turning the wilderness into a garden or a field, which the Lord has blessed. These are the Lord's doings, and they are marvellous in our eyes.

III. We learn from the subject not to be proud, or elated with prosperity.

Success often renders the person "another man." His deportment, his opinions, his affections, his language, are changed. His elevation has made him dizzy; he is intoxicated with self-complacency. Is this wise or rational? Is the sick man proud of his hospital? Will the inmates of the alms-house boast of their comfortable apartments? Why then do men boast of their genius, their talents, or acquirements? These are the gift of God. What have they which they have not received? "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth with it?"

To cure your pride, remember that in the midst of your prosperity, you are still dependent; your blessings are on the wing. To day your fields are promising; tomorrow comes a frost, and your hopes are gone. As your orchards this morning, covered with blossoms, delighting the eye, and perfuming the air, will soon lose their beauty, the flowers fallen, and scattered by the winds, so your felicities of health, and friends, possessions, and pleasures, of every name, will vanish away, to return no more. Is here reason for pride?

Will you boast of your bounties, when you recollect that the same favours are sometimes granted to the most worthless of the human family? No man knoweth love or hatred, by his worldly circumstances.

Nabal was rich, and Haman and Herod were powerful. Absalom by the charms of his person, and his captivating address, stole the hearts of Israel. He who lifted up his eyes in torment, crying for a drop of water, had been "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." Have you not known some of the vilest men, as rich, as distinguished in society, as prosperous, as you are? Where, then, is the ground for pride or self-complacency? The splendour of wealth, the friendship of the world, the pleasures of sense, are such a miserable portion, that God often confers them on the most wicked men. Your highest transports of success establish no claim to merit, give no decisive proof of the divine favour.

As a further remedy for pride and exultation, consider how inadequate is your success to satisfy your desires, to make you happy. Who is so rich, as not to feel a painful desire for greater possessions? "How delightful it would be," says the landholder, "had I only this house, or that field, or meadow, or yonder grove, added to my farm."

What prince or conqueror does not thirst for more extensive power and dominion? Like the all-devouring grave, the heart of man is perpetually crying "Give, give." Earthly good is not adapted to the wants of an immortal mind. Never is it satisfied with objects of sense; they leave an aching void. The soul of man, though fallen, and in ruins, like a fallen temple, exhibits the tokens of her former elevation and grandeur; she turns away dissatisfied with worldly good. As the ocean is not filled with all the rivers of the world, pouring in their floods from gen-

eration to generation, so the mind of man is not satisfied with all the streams of worldly prosperity. They furnish no cause for pride and vain glory.

IV. If all our success and consolation come from God, is it not presumptuous to depend on ourselves, or our hopeful means of success, while we neglect God.

Let all those, who confide in their own strength, remember that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding. "Time and chance," or rather the providence of God, governs all. The weakest army often raises the shout of victory. Ancient and modern days are replete with stories of this sort. Neglecting God, you neglect Him who gives power and efficacy to your own efforts, and all the means which you employ. The resolution is marked with atheism, when, without reference to God, you say, "to day, or tomorrow, I will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." You know not what will be on the morrow. What is your life? It is a vapour.

Every devout man will say, "If the Lord will, I shall live, and do this or that." Every thing respecting the future is uncertain, any further than we can learn the divine will. If you can find a promise, if you plead the promise, and believe the promise, your object is sure. But while you neglect God, relying on your own strength, or skill, or other flattering means, your hopes are on the sand; your confidence is vain; disappointment is at the door. Or should you succeed,

your success will not be prosperity; it may involve you, with Joseph's brethren, in remorse and shame.

"Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart."

Hezekiah exulted with vain glory, while he displayed his treasures before the servants of the king of Babylon. At the very sight they probably conceived the idea of bearing them away in triumph, while the prophet is commanded to announce to him the sad tidings, that "all that is in thine house shall be carried to Babylon, nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. Thy sons shall be captives in the palaces of Babylon." Learn, then, to acknowledge God in all thy ways, and he will direct thy paths. He will give success to thine affairs; not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

SERMON XII.

PROVERBS xxii, 29.

Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Action is every-where manifest. The sun is turning on his axis; the stars are moving in their courses; the earth is revolving in its orbit. Winds blow,—rivers run,—oceans roll. Birds are on the wing; cattle rove round a thousand hills; man goeth forth to his labours; angels are ascending and descending between heaven and earth. God himself works;—God is the most constant and powerful Agent in the universe. Though perpetually giving life and activity to his creatures, He never rests nor tires. A wakeful, active spirit pervades his works. Were a planet to stop in its course, it would destroy or derange the system. If a man is idle, it disturbs the moral order around him; a train is laid for unnumbered evils. Most of the troubles in this life; all the miseries of the life to come, result from the wrong employment of time.

Though at the commencement of his course, a man may labour with those, or be employed by those, who are mean, and low, and base; yet being diligent, he will rise; he will be distinguished; he will leave his murky atmosphère, his former associates; he will mingle in better society, and be admitted among persons of the highest standing. A diligent man will become independent and respectable.

The bible, and those sermons, which are conformable to the bible, give instructions pertaining to this life, as well as that to come;—they would make us good here, that we may be happy hereafter. It is, therefore, an indispensable duty to discuss topics like that suggested by the text; for such texts are parts of holy inspiration. No one then can object, lest he should manifest an ignorance of what is proper, or a pride which refuses instruction. The subject now selected, is as really inculcated in the Old and New Testaments, as are regeneration or the divine influences.

My object is to exhibit some of the reasons for diligence.

I. The make and character of body and mind indicate that they were formed for action. If man were not designed for action, why should every limb and faculty be adapted to such a purpose? If you enter the shop of a mechanic, and survey his tools, his axe, his saw, and his hammer, do you not conclude they were formed for use? But what instrument is more adapted for use, than the hands of man? Not an implement of the artisan is so ingeniously contrived for

labour. All the limbs, organs, and senses, speak the same language.

Is not the mind as evidently formed for action and diligence? Why else this perpetual inquisitiveness of spirit,—this restlessness of desire,—this intensity of passion,—this glowing ambition,—this daring enterprise,—this insatiable thirst for wealth, pleasure, and fame? Why is such energy of power given, if not to be exerted?

Since the fall of man labour has become *necessary*. The surly earth refuseth sustenance to man, unless she be corrected, disciplined, and subdued. Briars and thorns, serpents and tigers, she offers for your provision:—but these must be destroyed; wheat, rye, and barley must be sown; flocks and herds must be reared; houses and barns must be built;—numerous labours must be executed if man would *live* in this world. In China it is a maxim, that if one man be idle, some man must suffer for food and clothing; because the country will barely support them all, if all are industrious. This may, in some degree, be applicable to all countries.

II. Diligence is necessary to sustain the bodily and mental powers. Give a man wealth; let him recline on the sofa of pleasure; let him call his servants around him; let him indulge in every luxury, and avoid every exertion of body or mind, and how long will his faculties remain unimpaired? How long will it be ere his sinews will be unstrung, his muscles relaxed, his nerves shattered, his mind gloomy and sad, his health gone, and a thousand miseries shrouding every prospect? In vain do nurses and physicians

minister their opiates and cordials ;—in vain they advise him to roll in the carriage of pleasure. The light of the sun, and the fair face of nature, no longer animate his spirits ; the flowers, and gardens, the fields, and harvests, have no pleasures for him. Such is the effect of idleness, of rest, of luxury. So necessary is diligence.

III. By diligence, you will form a habit of labour, which will render it pleasant, and even necessary to your comfort. By custom, what was unpleasant becomes desirable ; what was painful becomes agreeable ; what was odious becomes necessary. However improbable this might, at first view, seem, it is demonstrated by daily experience, and the known laws of the human mind. By custom, labour becomes pleasant, promotive of our comfort, and in the strong language of common life, a second nature. The man, who in boyhood was delighted to escape from his task, to frolick in the field and sport in the water, is now unmoved, and continues cheerfully at his labour, notwithstanding all the parade and splendour of some great festive celebration. The child often considers his book and his school the greatest afflictions, and his father and teacher little better than tyrants for requiring his daily task ; but by degrees, frequently by very slow degrees, he acquires a habit of reading and study ; now his book becomes a luxury, and the privilege of mental improvement the richest felicity of his life. This, in a great degree, is true of every occupation and pursuit. Exertions of duty are satisfactory to the mind ; they are recollected with self-complacency ; they swell the tide of our happiness.

IV. Inestimable advantages result from diligence. Compare the idle and the diligent man. The idler drags himself along through the mire of poverty, chilled by the neglect of his friends, torn with the briars of their contempt. Drowsiness will clothe a man in rags; his poverty and want shall come as an armed man. The diligent hand maketh rich; he that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread; in all labour is profit.

Look round the land. Who are the rich men, the opulent merchants, the great landholders? Who are the men of knowledge, luminaries of church and state, the guides of public opinion? Without numerous exceptions, they are men, who a few years since, were not worth an acre of ground. Their hands, and resolute hearts, and habits of diligence, constituted all their wealth. They began life with nothing. They laboured, they studied, they persevered;—they were frugal of money, frugal of time;—they were industrious. They did not run to listen to this concert of music, nor to that eloquent advocate at the bar. Not all the pomp and noise that accompany the anniversary of our nation's freedom, could draw them from their shops, their fields, their studies. When invited to some neighbouring auction or military parade, they would severally reply;—"God sent me into the world to till my land,—me to tend my shop,—me to pursue my studies. I have no concern with shows and parades." These are the great men,—these are the rich men, to whom the idle go for a piece of bread. Such men acquire reputation. He, who is diligent, who is faithful, in season, and out of season, will be respect-

ed. Even while yet in the humble walks of life, he will be noticed and encouraged. If he persevere, with discretion, he will, at length, associate with great men; with the judges, and senators, and governours of the land:—I mean, if providence should cast him in their way.

If study be his employment, such a man will become distinguished in science. He will be enrolled with the luminaries of the age. His name, far and wide, will become familiar as a household-word; he will be a guide to the blind, and a blessing to the world; while his fellow-student, more disposed to self-indulgence, seldom at home, and never at his books, withers like a plant scorched by the sun, lives unknown, and dies unlamented.

V. These, and all other blessings, give us the higher satisfaction for being procured by our own prudence and industry. When a man, viewing his house and land, congratulates himself, is not his a justifiable self-complacency. "These are the fruit of my labours, purchased or improved by the sweat of my brow, by the frugality and toil to which I have submitted. These fields, these trees, bear the marks of my hands." Is not here a peculiar pleasure, a lively enjoyment, unknown to the sons of sloth?

If a man enjoy a good name, a fair reputation; if he stand among the nobles of the land; if, like Job, he be honoured as he passes in the street; is it not a reasonable satisfaction to recollect that his diligence in affairs has procured these attentions? His reputation and honour did not descend from his father;—they were not inherited like goods and chattels;—but

are the fruits of discretion and fidelity in his calling. Is he not reasonably entitled to self-gratulation? Is it possible for him to suppress the consciousness of his own agency, in the acquisition of these blessings? Is it desirable? Would it be right? Honour to whom honour is due.

VI. Diligence is an immense security against sin and vice. The idle man is exposed to every sin and crime. He is "like a city broken down and without walls," exposed to every enemy at home and abroad. So irksome and dismal is idleness, that he is ready to expose his innocence in any adventure, however presumptuous; so dull and melancholy is solitude, that he cheerfully mingles in any society, however base or dangerous.

Is a talent given him to be used, he buries it in the ground. Is Lazarus at his gate, covered with sores, and dying with anguish,—he is faring sumptuously, and cannot send him one drop of his cordials. Sodom, wrapped in the fires of heaven, contained no spirit within her walls, worse than licentious idleness.

Not such is the diligent man. He has no time for mischief. He has no time to spend with vain associates, or to learn their wicked examples. He has no time for scenes of prodigality and intemperance; no time to lie in wait for opportunity and temptation,—for crime and vice. He is unavoidably regular in his habits. He has an appropriate employment for every year, every day, and every hour. He has not only business for every hour, but an hour for every kind of business. He enjoys the present, and, with satisfaction, anticipates the future, because the employment

and the time are happily adjusted. No time hangs heavily on his hands for want of business. No business oppresses him for want of time. Here is little room for crime or temptation to enter.

Nor is this all his security. Diligent labour tames the spirit. The passions of the idle man are unmanageable,—inflaming every lust, and exposing him to every crime. But diligence quiets the desires, and restrains impetuous passions. Look at the man of steady diligence :—is he not sober, temperate, moral? Who does not covet his security from vice and crime?

VII. Diligence urges itself upon us, as being necessary to a happy and useful life, in any employment or profession. Survey your acquaintance; inquire of every man with whom you converse, recollect every page of biography, which you have read, and then name an idle man, who has been useful,—who has eminently answered the purposes of life. When did he live? What valuable service did he render to mankind? As well may you expect the Red Sea to rise again in walls, or the wilderness of Arabia to be covered with manna, as to look for idleness and usefulness combined. Without a miracle, an idle man must be not only a useless, but a noxious, member of society. Is he a farmer? Are his buildings repaired, his grounds improved, his stone walls a safe defence? Are his fields early planted, his harvests seasonably gathered? Are his children well furnished with clothing and books? Are they distinguished in all the schools for their good conduct, and progress in learning? Who ever heard of such a useful, idle man?

Is diligence less necessary in the learned professions? Imagine an idle advocate at the bar. After much difficulty, his client has found him, though not in his office. Will he now listen with patience to the tedious detail of circumstances? Will he understand the nature of the facts? Will he perceive on what point the whole question rests? Will his past reading enable him to give proper advice? Will he, to prevent all possibility of mistake, review the statutes and reports referring to the case? Will he prepare himself for the trial, so as to be master of the subject, of the testimony, and the law? Will he speak in a prompt manner, in a finished style, with pathos and eloquence, carrying conviction to the minds of judges and jurors? Did you ever know an idle lawyer to acquit himself in this manner? The advocate, who would ably and faithfully discharge his duty, must be deeply read in ancient and modern law,—in the principles of justice,—and the decisions of the courts. He must be a diligent man, as indeed must every one in every occupation, who would be either useful or distinguished.

Neither can these persons enjoy the rich felicities of their profession, without persevering industry. If the husbandman be industrious, his lands will be productive; his produce will more than reward his toil; his harvests will be the jubilees of his life; he will have food for his household, with a surplus to meet the demands of charity, of religion, and government. His heart expands with gratitude and joy; he walks erect among his neighbours; courts and jails, and winter's frosts, have no terrours for him. He has enough, and

owes no man any thing but love. Is he not a happy man?

How blest is the physician. He has quieted restless fevers,—stopped the progress of wasting consumptions,—healed broken bones,—poured in light and vision, where darkness had shrouded the eye, and hidden the beauty of the world. He has restored children to their trembling parents; he has rescued husband and wife from the opening grave. Does not the physician's heart bound with joy? Does he not liberally share in the blessings, which he confers on others?

The advocate at the bar sees the oppression of the widow and fatherless; he sees the fraudulent man assail the simple and unwary, alike unconscious of blame, and unprepared for defence; or he sees one accused of a capital crime, his life trembling in the balance, and death threatening him in its most terrific form. Convinced of their innocence, he becomes to such an angel of deliverance. The law and the evidence are familiar to his mind. He rises with the irresistible power of truth; with luminous eloquence, dispels the mists of errour and delusion; he arrests the danger; he relieves the victims. His elaborate investigation triumphs over falsehood, and deception, and circumstances artfully or dangerously combined. Is he not in the course of rational and elevated felicity?

The minister of religion reclaims the wandering, instructs the ignorant, awakens the careless, and sometimes saves those, who were lost. He is the servant of God, to prepare sons and daughters for

glory. He loves them as his children. They respect him as a friend and father. They are his joy and crown of rejoicing. Is he not a happy man?

But all these men, to reap the comforts of their various callings, must be faithful, must be diligent, must work while the day lasts, doing their duty with all their might. In season, and out of season, they must be seen in their fields, or in the courts, among their patients and their people, not avoiding but watching for opportunities of useful labour,—enjoying their habits of persevering diligence. To such pleasures the idle are strangers. They are not accustomed to eminent success. They have no occasion to congratulate themselves, or to receive the thanks of others. They never triumph in the raptures of holy benevolence.

Indeed is it possible for the idle man to be a reputable Christian,—to be a good man? Are not a thousand duties perpetually calling him to occupy every hour,—to employ all his powers? If he disregard these calls of duty, can he be considered good? Can that man find time for sloth, who cultivates his mental powers,—seeks for wisdom as for hidden treasure, and diligently makes his calling and election sure; who duly regards his worldly interest, takes care of his household, and lays up for his children; who answers the cries of humanity and charity, visits the sick, feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked?

VIII. Without diligence, it is not possible to enjoy peace of mind, or the approbation of our own conscience. These are essential to rational enjoyment. An idle man, therefore, cannot be happy. Happiness

arises from the contemplation of something, which is desirable and pleasant; something which we approve, and love. But how little that is pleasant or lovely does the idle man find in his temper or conduct. What does he do to command his own respect? Unless his whole soul were in disorder, how could he love himself? Suppose he undertakes to analyze his own conduct—to extract something that may promote his self-esteem; What will be the result? Listen to his considerate soliloquy. "My parents were kind, and disposed to render me all reasonable assistance; they gave me such advantages for education, as their circumstances and my talents rendered proper; but my improvement was by no means answerable. I had some property, but that, from my want of judgment, or some other cause, has melted away, and now I "have poverty enough." My friends were kind and respectful,—but they seem to have deserted me. My morals were pure, but now they are tarnished and suspected. My hopes were high and flattering, but now I almost despair. Many of my companions have become eminent and happy; I am obscure and miserable." Such are the reflections of the idle man. What ground has he for self-approbation? Can he enjoy a quiet conscience? If that monitor be not dead, must it not be armed with a lash of scorpions? Is it not his perpetual tormentor?

Look now for a moment at the man of industrious habits. His parents, perhaps, were poor; his opportunities for education few and unfavourable; but his uncommon application enabled him to surpass his fellows. Beginning his course with nothing but his

hands and a sturdy resolution, he has acquired a decent competence; he has been enabled to relieve the poor, to assist his aged parents, and to aid the great cause of general benevolence. From the darkest obscurity, he has risen into notice, and public estimation. His children rise up and call him blessed; and well they may, for they have received the best education, and enjoy the fairest prospects. Are not here streams of comfort, solid pillars of joyful hope, just reasons for peace of mind, and a quiet conscience? Is he not abundantly rewarded for his sober diligence, his labours, and privations?

In one word, idleness destroys time,—time, that precious gift of heaven to man; time, by which we become wise, enlarge our possessions, increase in favour with God and man, secure pleasure here, and glory in the world to come. Time is "the stuff" of which life is made. By the right use of which, we virtually prolong life, multiply our days, live more than other men. Idleness contracts the narrow limits of life, shortens our days, quickens the march of time, hastens on the hearse and the funeral procession, which conduct us to the dismal cavern of the grave.

Sloth is death advancing, weakening the intellect, depraving the heart, diffusing a fatal palsy over body and soul. The child of sloth is like a meagre shrub in the burning sand, without vigour, beauty, or fruit. The man of industry may be compared to a cedar of Lebanon, rising in grandeur, nourished by the soil, the atmosphere, and the showers of heaven, and extending far and wide its salutary and protecting shade.

REFLECTIONS.

1. No eminence, or distinction of circumstances will excuse men from diligence and care. Some persons idly imagine that the rich, and those who are elevated to office, and perhaps men in the learned professions, may rest from their labours, and indulge their ease. The idea is unfounded and delusive. Distinction in wealth, honour, or knowledge, so far from allowing indulgence, imposes new obligations to diligence and care. I do not say that all are bound to labour in the same manner, but that no elevation will give countenance to sloth. Office and eminence are new calls to fidelity and labour. Riches are as the lever and pulley in mechanics; they give immense additional power to do good, to benefit men, to honour God, and they demand correspondingly greater exertions. Knowledge to the student is like a sure guide and a smooth path to the traveller. He hastens on with new ardour and success. The greater his present attainments, the more he feels to be required of him. Abundance of time, or of possessions, instead of giving license to dissipation and prodigality, raises the demand for economy and care. Diligence itself is not more necessary. Of two men, whose privileges, whose industry, whose acquirements are equal, one may retain ten-fold, or a hundred-fold, more than the other. What is the portion of the prodigal son, however opulent his father? What are the most extensive acquisitions, unless when used with wisdom and economy?

II. We see how greatly idle men miscalculate the chances of human happiness. They intend to supplant their neighbours; to secure a larger share of enjoyment. They design a stolen march, and congratulate themselves on their superiour foresight. Indulging themselves in the shades of rest, on the couch of slumber, and at the table of luxury, they point the finger of derision at their friends, plodding, and toiling, weary, and faint, with their unremitted labour. They congratulate themselves as forestallers and monopolizers, in the market of happiness. They believe themselves wise calculators; but when the result is produced, they are found to be miserable proficients in the arithmetic of human comfort.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo, it was all grown over with thorns: nettles had covered the ground, and the stone wall was broken down: his house was marked with decay, and his children were crying for bread. Yet I heard the wretch exclaim, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber; a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Surely, said I, this is the dwelling of misery and despair. Such is the idle husbandman.

Look at the idle physician. He is roving any where, and listening anywhere, rather than with his patients. He moves about without system or energy. His visits are tardily made, and unnecessarily protracted. Most of the little he had once learned, is forgotten. A few prescriptions answer for all cases. Palsy, and fever, spasm, and consumption, are encountered with similar remedies, while his patients, silent

in their tombs, tell no tales, report no deceptions. He is forsaken by the prudent and well-informed, he preys on the poor and the ignorant. Is he not a stranger to true enjoyment, and rational felicity?

To be impartial, must I draw an idle pastor? The species are various. The conceited man, always prepared, and the enthusiast, waiting for inspiration, may be their own painters. A better class will give us performances, prepared without the research of reading, or the labour of thought, unedifying as the effusions of enthusiasm, and even less interesting.—I dare not proceed. The effects of this idleness are not doubtful. The people generally become uninterested in what is said or done; they neglect public worship; vacant seats are numerous. Those who resort to the house of God, are careless and indifferent, wrapped in slumber, or sending their thoughts to the ends of the earth. New opinions are adopted; sects and divisions increase; people have itching ears. The rest need not be told.

Such are not the effects of diligent and impressive instruction. This will rouse the attention; this will lead men to inquire and understand; their hostile opinions are harmonized; their divisions are healed. For want of this faithful diligence, how many pastors have ruined themselves and families, and scattered their flocks. Who can number the woes of idleness in public and private life? They darken they air, from the valley, to the mountain top; they spread misery, from the child in the factory, to the prince on his throne.

III. How necessary are discretion and goodness, to direct the hand of diligence to suitable objects,

and in a right spirit. As cunning is not wisdom, but essentially different, so there may be persevering activity, which does not deserve the laudable name of diligence:—there may be labour which is not commendable. We may be habitually active and restless in our exertions, and yet render no benefit to others, obtain no good ourselves, and in fact, be actuated by no praiseworthy motives. Such labours may be prompted by the worst passions, and may produce much mischief. Some of the most malignant and injurious animals are among the most active. Absalom and Judas were active, enterprising, and bold; but for want of discretion and of goodness, their exertions were baleful to others, and fatal to themselves. Others, though harmless in their intentions, for want of judgment, produce little good. Some persons are ever learning, yet never come to the knowledge of the truth; so others are perpetually active, without accomplishing much that is valuable for themselves or others.

Wisdom is necessary to direct the active exertions of man, in order that he should live usefully and happily. To this end, he must know himself, his powers, passions, and attainments. He must ascertain his capacity for the various employments around him, as well as their relative importance, and select and pursue them with a zeal excited and guided by knowledge. A failure here is a common cause of the disappointments, the perplexities, and the miseries of men. They bestow on trifles the labour and time, which are due only to things of high importance. Things of real consequence are

treated as trifles. Personal accomplishments are preferred to intellectual attainments; treasures in heaven are sacrificed for the fleeting treasures of earth; the applause of man is dearer to the heart, than the honour which cometh from God.

Here it may be distinctly noticed, that the favour and mercy of God are not promised to passive slumber, to slothful quietism; but to diligence in religious inquiry:—"then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know." Mercy is promised to those who seek the Lord; to those who work out their salvation; to those who give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. If in all things we are bound to be diligent, how pressing our obligation to be so in the concerns of eternity;—if it is our indispensable duty to be useful in this life, how much more should we prepare to serve God forever; if we should labour for the blessings of time, for the pleasures which cannot satisfy the heart, can we, with impunity, neglect the joys of heaven, the glories which fill the soul? Scripture not only calls upon us to be diligent, to labour, that we may eat our own bread, and provide for our own families; but it also calls upon us to seek first the kingdom of God; to prefer this object before all other things. Salvation is the great design of life. Generally some appropriate course of duty in some particular calling is to be pursued. The more faithful and disinterested you are in this, the purer may be your religion, the higher you may rise in the divine favour; the more sure is your salvation. Being faithful over a few things, you will be made ruler over many things, and will enter into the joy of your Lord.

From this stated calling, nothing should divert you. Amusements, avocations, other labours, are to be pursued no farther than they promote this main employment, this grand object of life. It is not enough to be busy here and there; it is not enough to be laborious, unless your labour be such as God requires, and your motive be obedience to his commands. Can you expect him to reward or approve your zeal and toils to gratify yourself, your thirst for wealth, your love of the world? Can you ask him to be pleased with your bustling activity, when its sole object is to gratify your own ambition, and love of fame? Can you promise yourself the divine approbation, merely because you have been attentive and diligent to secure the riches of this world, the pleasures of this life, the gratifications of sense? Is this zeal for earthly good, this desire for self-indulgence, this unwearied chase of phantoms, the pure diligence, the elevated pursuit, required by reason and scripture? Is it a faithful use of talents, is it a suitable return for divine blessings? Or is it groveling selfishness, the wisdom of this world, the essence of depravity, and rebellion against heaven?

Pursued with such a spirit, this diligence, and these labours become impediments in the great object of life, the work of salvation. They leave no room for meditation, for prayer, and other essential duties of the Christian course. They afford no just reason for comfort or hope, but only for grief, humiliation, and terrour. Although we display the activity of apostles, and endure the sufferings of martyrs, while destitute of the love and fear of God, he ranks us among his

enemies. To imagine that God will reward your intemperate self-love and ambition, with the enterprise, care, and toil, which they produce, is to forget that He looks at the heart, that without faith it is impossible to please Him, that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

You are distinguished among men of business; but are you known in the dwellings of sorrow and distress? You are envied for your restless ardour, and eminent success in your various pursuits; but are you an example of believers, a disciple of Jesus, a pillar of his church? Your name may live, when your body sleeps in dust, but are you written in the book of life?

Commune with your own heart, ponder the paths of your feet, watch, and be sober, fear God, and keep his commandments;—then may you eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God accepteth your work, and will place you among the kings of the earth.

SERMON XIII.

JOHN iii, 14, 15.

But as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

In the infancy of the world, God instructed man by signs, which were addressed to his senses. A flaming sword, a dying victim with its streaming blood, and the smoking altar, were the first teachers of our race. Afterwards, when divine instruction assumed a more systematic form, and the art of writing was employed to give more distinct information, still material objects were often employed to enforce doctrines or duties, which were rational and spiritual. Reference was had to persons, to things, or events, which were emblems or symbols of such religious truths, as were not readily received by minds, not enriched by moral or intellectual culture. In this manner, evangelical truth is often presented in the Old Testament. Indeed, the Old Testament is the gospel, revealed very

much in sensible signs, types, and bold figures of speech. The sacrifice of a lamb represented "the propitiation to be made for the sins of the world." The scape-goat was an emblem of Him, who has since "borne our sins in his own body on the tree." The brazen serpent was a wonderful representation of the Saviour, raised on the cross of Calvary. The mode of his death seems to have been a circumstance of importance. "If I be *lifted up*, I will draw all men unto me." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; so must the Son of man be *lifted up*." Although a Jew, he must stand at a Roman tribunal, indicted for an offence, not cognizable by their laws, and be condemned to an ignominious punishment, unknown to the courts of his own nation. So surprising was the *mode* of the Saviour's death.

To illustrate the coincidence of the symbol in the text with the death of Christ, is my present design.

I. As the brazen serpent was not raised nor proposed, till the people were bitten and dying; so the Saviour was not crucified nor promised, till man had sinned, and was perishing.

God did not say to Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole," till "the fiery serpents had bitten the people, and much people of Israel had died." Their distress was overwhelming, before any remedy was provided, before any relief was suggested. In such a crisis of misery, when the tribes were distracted with terrour; when the serpents filled the air; when their poison was scattering death through the desert;—was the splendid symbol of mercy raised on the banner of Israel.

Such was the state of the human family before a Saviour was announced. They had sinned; they had fled; they had hidden themselves among the trees of the garden. Guilty, trembling, despairing, they heard the well known steps, and the endearing voice of their Creator; "Adam, where art thou?" 'Where art thou, my son, my beloved children? Do you fly from your father's love? Do you conceal yourselves from my parental eye? Do you call in question my compassion and tenderness? Do not despair; do not hide yourselves among the trees; return to your Father's love; the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head; a star shall rise, to guide you to bliss; the sun of righteousness shall dispel your darkness, and cover you with light and glory.'

II. As the serpent was raised *in view* of the camp; so must Jesus Christ be revealed, or made *manifest*, to those whom he saves.

Had some intervening object obstructed the view; or had the distance been so great, as to render the emblem of mercy invisible, its virtues had been lost, its healing powers had never been known; the people must have perished. Had the serpent been made; had the metal been polished, and rendered dazzling as the sun; had the construction been perfect, so as to represent life, and breath, and motion; yet if it had not been made visible; if it had not been raised in sight of the perishing tribes, they had not been healed.

So in order to save perishing sinners, Jesus Christ must be made known; he must be revealed, and proclaimed. This gives to every missionary exertion in-

finite importance. We do not say how little knowledge of Jesus Christ may secure the salvation of the sinner; but some manifestation seems to be necessary. Why else, according to Scripture, must "this gospel of the kingdom be preached in all the world?" "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?" Therefore, the Apostles must "teach all nations." This perfectly accords with reason, with fact, or experience in all other cases. Is the desert of Africa, or the wilderness of Arabia, made fertile, or sprinkled with blossoms, by the clouds and showers of Canaan, which never extend to their borders, to cool their burning atmosphere, to cheer their desolation, with the sound of rain? Does the apostolic preacher, announcing life and salvation, instruct or comfort that portion of the congregation, who do not hear his voice? Is the ear delighted with music, which it never hears; or the eye with beauty, which it never sees? Is the thirsty traveller refreshed with the fountain, of which he never drinks, or is the hungry man satisfied with the banquet, which has never been offered him? Can a man believe and be saved by a Redeemer, who has never been announced to him? Can revelation enlighten those, whom it doth not reach, or guide those, whom it doth not enlighten? The sun does not benefit those, who are enclosed in dungeons; neither does the Saviour comfort or deliver those, who are not illumined by his revelation. Where the precepts of Jesus are not known, can they direct the conduct, control the passions, or guide the soul to glory? Where his promises are unknown, can they dispense holy zeal, or consolation, or hope? He that never

heard the promise of acceptance with God, how can he obtain encouragement to seek the divine mercy? He who never heard the promise of the Holy Spirit, how can he cherish, or pray for his divine operations? With those to whom heaven has not been revealed, can it be an object of pursuit or desire? What can rouse men to flee from the wrath to come, but knowing the terrours of the Lord? That men may believe and be saved, Jesus Christ must be made known to them.

III. As looking to the serpent was necessary to the healing of the Israelites; so looking to Jesus, or believing in him, is necessary to salvation.

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." To turn an eye, to look, and see the serpent, was necessary. A voluntary act of the patient was indispensable. Although the wounded Israelite was near; although he stood under the healing banner; although he handled this symbol of life; although he raised it up himself for others to see and be healed; none of these things would restore him, unless he looked himself. The rays from the dazzling object, falling on his passive organs of sight, would not heal his wounds. He must *look*.

So an active faith is necessary, that we may be healed of our spiritual wounds. Without faith it is impossible to please God. To enjoy his redemption, sinners must look to Jesus Christ. Wherever his gospel is proposed to men, they are called to action, to believe. A passive spirit, a spirit of slumber, is the spirit of moral death. Therefore, men are called

upon to look to the Saviour; to seek him, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

IV. As the wounded Israelites had no other means of recovery, but the brazen serpent; so sinners have no other means of salvation, but Jesus Christ.

No record shows that any, or all the physicians of Israel could heal one person. All the spices of Arabia were useless; all the miraculous waters of Horeb's rock would not extinguish the fire of the poison. Vain were prayers; vain were all human means. Nothing but a sight of the winged serpent on the banner of the camp, would assuage the fiery venom. Philosophy and religion may exhaust their various resources; still as long as the winged foe is among the tents, as long as the people are bitten, the poison rankles in their veins; every serpent is armed with death, and every wound is fatal.

So nothing but a crucified Saviour can deliver lost men, from the ruin produced by the serpent of Eden. Christ alone is "the way" to endless felicity; he alone is "the life" and felicity of immortal man; he alone is "the door" of hope and happiness; he alone is "the Physician" to heal the fatal malady of sin. Though men have devised other means; other means have failed them. Some hope to secure the divine favour by the uniformity of their good works. An amiable young man mentioned in the gospel, while contemplating the divine commands, says, "All these have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet." 'I have obey'd the law; I have lived without

reproach; why may I not depend on the divine favour, and future felicity?" Yet, the Saviour gives him a lesson of deeper self-denial. The cross is too heavy; the price of heaven too dear; with disappointed sorrow, he retires from his faithful teacher.

Others trust in their orthodoxy; their sound principles. They believe all that the prophets and apostles have spoken. They believe the revelation which God has given of his Son; they believe the threatenings of the word; they yield a cold, speculative assent to the duties enjoined, and what is more, far more in their view, they believe the doctrines of revelation. Whatever is popularly believed, to be "the faith once delivered to the saints," they believe in the gross. Nothing is too dismal, nothing too mysterious, to be inserted in their creed. Yet, they "hold the truth in *unrighteousness*." While their faith is orthodox, their lives are polluted with practical heresy. Still they think themselves the favourites of heaven. They expect to stand next to apostles and martyrs, though Scripture has told them, that faith without works is dead, and he only, who *doeth* righteously, is *righteous*.

Others depend on their strict observance of external rites and ordinances. The language of such an one is 'I fast twice in the week; I have eaten and drunk at the table of the Lord; and constantly meet the Society for prayer; I dwell as it were in the house of the Lord.'

Scripture admonishes such, that unless their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they cannot see the kingdom of God. They may pray much, and read much, and hear

much, and know much, and profess great piety; yet unless they believe in Christ Jesus, they must die in their sins. Christ will not give his glory to another. He will not permit another to share with him the honour of man's salvation. He will be the only Saviour of lost man. The wounded Israelite was not cured partly by a view of the brazen serpent, and partly by the application of medicine. In no case was it partly owing to the smallness of the wound, or the mildness of the poison, or the strength of the constitution, that any person recovered. All their deliverance, all their hope, rose from the serpent of brass; from raising their eye to that symbol of divine mercy.

So the whole recovery of sinners depends on their beholding the lamb of God, their faith in Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that, which is laid." "No other name is given under heaven among men, by which they can be saved." Their salvation in no part depends on the native gentleness of their disposition, the small number of their sins, or the mere morality of their lives. They are justified by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ. Their numerous concerts of prayer; their frequent religious assemblies, their sober professions, and their splendid sacrifices, as matters of justification, are only sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals.

V. As a look to the serpent of brass assuredly cured the most dismal wound; so looking to Jesus Christ will save the most guilty sinner.

Hear what God says to Moses. "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh

upon it shall live." Here is no exception for unworthy subjects, for remarkable wounds, or desperate circumstances. Though an Israelite had been bitten in the most dreadful manner; though the wounds were numerous, and deep, and large, and in a vital part; though he had been for a long time languishing in distress; his body swollen, gangrene advancing, and the palsy of death invading his limbs; still if he looked; if he saw the shining emblem of mercy, he revived, his pulse beat, his limbs moved. If he raised his half closed eye to the banner of love, he lived,—he recovered. So although your sins may have been exceedingly great and numerous, "as crimson or as scarlet," if you by faith behold the lamb of God, hope in him, and trust in him; you shall be received, as a child of God, an heir of glory.

Though you have long resisted the Holy Spirit; though you have afflicted and grieved the people of God, and trampled on the blood of the covenant; yet if you now look to the cross of Jesus, you shall know the blessedness of the man, whose sins are forgiven. If you have sinned against great light and endearing love, breathing hatred, and malice, slaughter and death, against those, who are the salt of the earth, and light of the world; still the Saviour calls after you; "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Saul of Tarsus had persecuted the church of God, had been crimsoned with the blood of the saints; but he heard, he saw Jesus Christ, and obtained mercy. Manasseh was covered with blood; but he trusted in the mercy of God, and was pardoned, and saved. The

chief of sinners have obtained mercy, and are bending before the throne of God and the Lamb.

VI. As the appointment of the serpent, and the circumstances of the cure, were a display of divine sovereignty; so also, were the death of Christ, and other great events, in the salvation of man.

The fiery serpent of brass could not be the device of human skill. Had all the philosophers and physicians of the world been consulted, they must have said, that such a representation of the venomous creature, which inflicted the wound, would be a dangerous experiment. From the powerful principle of association or suggestion, it would tend to revive the terrours of the patient, to disturb his spirits, to aggravate his disease, to protract, and perhaps to prevent, his recovery. Such must have been the reasoning of man. The salutary serpent of brass was made by the sovereign command of God, to stain the pride of all flesh, to show his own immediate agency, in the recovery of those who were wounded, independently of human aid. The same sovereignty is displayed in man's redemption. Who would have anticipated such results from the death of Christ by wicked hands? Who would not have said, 'This will increase the guilt of the human family; this will afford new cause of condemnation; and plunge them deeper and deeper in misery and despair?'

Indeed, the principal circumstances of redemption, the person employed, the mode of accomplishing the object, the race of beings to be redeemed, are evidently dictated by the same sovereign wisdom. Why should the Son of God become the victim of divine

justice? Why should death be the means of eternal life? Why should men be elected to the high destination of endless happiness, while angels are left in chains and darkness?

In a word, it seems to be the sovereign pleasure of God, to raise those who are low; to distinguish those, who have no power of their own. The general aspect of Providence coincides with this.

For a moment, transport yourself to the banks of the Nile. Look at the weeping babe in the ark of bulrushes. Can you venerate him as the future legislator and guardian of Israel? Now, pass to the land of Canaan; notice the arrival of Joseph and his family, to be taxed at Bethlehem; see the Magi of the East approach with their gold, and their frankincense; accompany them to the humble manger; can you join them in worshipping the infant son of Mary?

Go back in imagination to the morn of creation. See the father of mankind imbibing life, moving on the ground, rising from the dust, gazing on the sun and surrounding objects; hear the sons of God shout for joy, and the morning stars raise the song of gladness. Do you believe that man, a worm of the dust, will ever rise and approach their glory, only a little lower than the angels of light? When further instructed in these subjects; when you have seen the children of Adam raised from the dust, and placed among the angels of glory; when you have seen Moses, the legislator of nations; and the babe of Bethlehem, at the right hand of the Father, having all power in heaven and earth; do you not acknowledge and adore the sovereign power of God?

Did he not proceed according to his own independent wisdom, uninfluenced by men or angels? This is the sovereignty of God. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" With whom took he counsel, in giving his Son to die for lost sinners? Who taught him to save men, rather than fallen angels? Were they not as deserving? Were their sins of a deeper die? Would they not have been as thankful for redeeming love? Yet, while man has only to look to the Saviour to obtain mercy, no mercy is provided for fallen angels. Man is enlivened by a state of probation, joy in his heart, and heaven in his eye. Angels are reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. No Redeemer has visited their dismal mansion. No banner of mercy has waved on the walls of their prison. No apostles of Jesus have been sent to them, with the glad tidings of redeeming love. No ministers of the gospel are now persuading them to be reconciled to God.

For the salvation of sinners the blood of Jesus is offered without money, and without price; for this, the Holy Spirit strives, and enlightens their minds, a thousand concerts of prayer are attended, and millions of Bibles are dispersed;—but for fallen angels, the blood of Christ is not offered; the Holy Spirit does not strive; not one prayer is offered; not one Bible is given. No deliverer attempts to open their prison door. No physician has gone to bind up their bleeding hearts; no good Samaritan pours in

the wine and oil of consolation; not a single word of comfort has ever cheered their miserable dwelling; not a ray of light has ever gleamed on their sight; not a drop of rain has fallen on their burning lake.

God, with all his love—God, with all his tender mercy, has never once said, "Lucifer, son of the morning, I do earnestly remember thee still." The Saviour of the world, who laid down his life for sinners, who bled on the cross for sinners, has never dropped one tear over fallen angels, has never spoken a word of kindness, to soothe the agonies of their despair. Yet man he loads with his mercies; man he saves from the gulf of ruin, and raises to glory, to dwell in the temple above, and join in the songs of immortality.

Who, then, will not approve and admire the sovereign mercy of God to ruined sinners?

REFLECTIONS.

I. The subject may teach us the felicity of the change from sin to holiness.

It is like a recovery from the bite of a serpent. The terrours of guilt and remorse are like the anguish of those bitten by the fiery serpents. Our enemy is the old serpent; his temptations are "fiery darts." They bite like a serpent, they sting like an adder. No wound is so intolerable. The curses of the Law are as "deep wounds;" the tokens of divine wrath are more dreadful, than all the terrours of the Arabian desert. But faith in Jesus, restoration to the favour of God, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are as health to the sick, as life to the dying.

The poor Israelite is in terrour; he is actually bitten; the poison is burning in his veins; pain and anguish have seized his whole frame. All are equally exposed; all are distracted with the same danger. In this mournful crisis, Moses is seen on yonder eminence, raising the ensign of the camp, on which is fastened a brazen serpent. The people look and look with holy wonder. Instantly the anguish of their wounds is assuaged; their pains are gone; the dying live. But just now, the serpents were hovering on every side, darting, with wings of fire, into every tent. No age, no sex escaped their deadly fangs. Fathers were bitten; mothers and children were bitten; all were dying. In the midst of this alarm and terrour, while parents were weeping over their children, and children gazing at the ghastly visages of their parents, one turns his eye to the serpent of brass, and finds instant relief; others look, and are healed; their fever subsides; their agony of body, and horrour of mind, are gone. They can hardly realize the change, or believe what they feel. They fear it is a dream, a delusion, a delirium of errour. Still the change is manifest to all. Sighs of anguish, and shrieks of terrour, are changed to raptures of joy, and songs of praise.

Such, often, is the transition from sin to holiness, from unbelief to faith. He, that has sown in tears, reaps in joy. Such was the joy of Adam, when he heard the Saviour say, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Such was the bliss of Naaman, when he washed in Jordan, and was made whole. Such was the bliss of Saul, when the scales

fell from his eyes; and such, in some measure, is the felicity of all, who bow to the prince of Peace. "Blessed is the man, whose sins are forgiven." He is often ready to cry, "Come all ye who fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." His terrours of conscience have passed away, his slavish fears and anxieties have subsided into that gentle fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, his hopes and his comfort more and more evidently rest on the Rock of ages. Such relief has been experienced; such divine consolations are well known to myriads, who are now pillars in the church of Christ; to myriads, who are now bowing before the throne of God and the Lamb.

II. How possible and easy is salvation by Jesus Christ.

As the serpent was lifted up, so is the son of man. As an Israelite had only to look to the serpent of brass, so sinners have only to look to Jesus Christ. As multitudes of Israel were healed by looking to their banner, so a multitude, which no man can number, have been saved by the cross of Calvary. Was not the remedy easy for them? Is not the remedy as easy for us? Was it not easy for them to raise their eye to the shining symbol of health? Is it not easy for us to behold the Lamb of God? No miraculous aid, no supernatural influence was necessary to brighten the vision of a distressed son of Abraham. He need only look. We need only look, or believe. Why will ye die?

III. Wicked men are destroyed, merely because they will not believe in Christ.

After the brazen serpent was elevated in the camp, did any of the people perish? It was because they did not desire life. They would not make an effort; they would not lift an eye; they would not move a muscle. Did they not wantonly throw away their lives, murder themselves?

Do sinners now perish? Is it not merely because they "love death," and will not seek salvation, nor look to Jesus Christ for pardon and eternal life? This is just as simple an act, just as practicable, just as easy, as for a proud, stubborn Israelite to adopt his humble remedy, to believe in the efficacy of dead brass, to save his precious life, to believe in the miraculous virtue of a hidden serpent, to deliver him from the shades of death. He that blames a perishing son of Jacob, condemns himself, unless he looks to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

Will it not be more tolerable for the tribes of Israel, as well as for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you, unless you believe the record, which God has given of his Son? The efficacy of his cross is abundantly manifest. In past ages, and in our day, he has done wonderful things. We have reason to bless his name, for what our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard. The nations are waking from the slumber of ages. God is doing great things in the land Ham, and in other countries, not by thunder, and darkness, and death; but, by the still, small voice of his Spirit, and by the heralds of the cross. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

SERMON XIV.

1 CORINTHIANS i, 24.

Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

That human nature is in a lapsed, depraved state, has been observed, and acknowledged, from the first records of time. From ancient days, the tale of the historian, and the song of the bard, have proclaimed the reign of vice and crime.

In early ages, pagan philosophers perceived the necessity of some superiour teacher, to instruct mankind, and deliver them from their darkness and misery. Discouraged by the inefficacy of their own feeble efforts, they waited the advent of a deliverer sent from God.

To restrain and govern this deplored waywardness of mankind, legislators have enacted laws, moralists have published their systems of ethics, prophets and apostles have announced the messages of God. Hence in every age, the world, conscious of their vast importance, has holden in high estimation, legislators and magistrates, temples, altars, priests. And although

some of these modes of restraint have been barbarous and vicious, yet on the whole, they have accomplished vast good. All have in some respects been salutary. The vilest despotism is better than licentious anarchy. No system of paganism is so mischievous, as absolute impiety and atheism. But the most sublime paganism, is the device of man, the wisdom of this world.

It is in the gospel, in the revelation of Jesus Christ, that we discover the only effectual mode of restraining, governing, and perfecting, the human character. He alone is the wisdom of God and the power of God, for the redemption of lost men. To illustrate this fact is my present design.

I. Jesus Christ is the wisdom and power of God, in the illumination or instruction of those who receive his gospel.

The knowledge of Jesus Christ has been sufficiently limited, to give mankind the fairest opportunity of showing what they can themselves effect, in the science of morals, in the rites of religious worship, in the practice of every duty. These experiments, in different ages and countries, have produced full proof that the world by wisdom do not know God, that the human mind, with all its mighty powers, even when aided by all the effulgence of the arts and sciences, obtains no adequate ideas of God, of a rational mode of worship, of the doctrines to be believed, of the duties to be performed. No fact is more firmly established by the experience of ages, than the absolute necessity of a divine revelation.

Truths, familiar to our children, puzzled and perplexed the luminaries of the pagan world. Not only

the sun, and stars, but beasts, and men, and vegetables, have been worshipped as gods. Men have every where been offered on the bloody altar. Such foolish, barbarous worship has not been confined to savage nations; whether you go back to the ancient Phœnicians, Egyptians, Greeks, or Romans, or make yourselves familiar with modern Asia, you find for substance the same idolatry, the same worship of the same gods. While Babylon, and Memphis, Athens, and Rome, have in succession been emporiums of the arts, and mistresses of the world, they never emerged from the darkness of idolatry, in religion they never made any sensible improvement. In the words of Bossuet, "Reasoning will not cure the delirium of idolatry. What has learned antiquity gained by her elaborate discourses? her reasonings so artfully framed? Did Plato, with that eloquence which was styled divine, overthrow one single altar, where those monstrous divinities were worshipped?"

It was reserved for revelation, for Jesus Christ, to rouse the nations, to enlighten the world. He teaches man to know himself, to know his God, to know his Redeemer. He teaches a system of perfect morals, and of pure worship. It was assigned him, to destroy the gods, who have not made the heavens and the earth. They shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. Wherever the gospel has shone, they have perished. Wherever Christianity prevails, whether in the forests of Siberia, or in the voluptuous bowers of the Society Islands, on the banks of the Ganges, or amid the snows of New Britain, there you see a purer worship and improved morals. There the

pagan altars are overturned, the worshippers are dispersed, the god and the goddess are gone.

II. It is the work of Christ to convince men of sin, to enlighten the conscience. Here is impressively displayed the wisdom and the power of God. In this work, Jesus Christ employs the Holy Spirit. However difficult it may be precisely to define the difference between knowledge and conviction, the distinction is very generally admitted. Conviction of sin is necessary. Those, who imagine themselves whole, will never apply to the great physician. Without conviction of sin, no escape, no effort to escape from guilt and danger, will be made.

The pagans have their lofty temples, their numerous altars, their costly sacrifices, their long prayers, but they make no confession of sin. We hear them cry, we see them cut themselves, but we do not hear them anxiously inquire, "Who shall deliver us from this body of death."

It is Jesus Christ who teaches us to bow down under the weight of our sins. He sends the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

See a convinced sinner, sometimes a whole people, coming up to the temple, ready like the poor publican, to smite on their breasts, and to cry, "God be merciful to us sinners." This is the work of God, the work of Jesus Christ. He has sent the Holy Spirit to convince these lost men.

In all the public assemblies of Greece and Rome, such an appearance was never witnessed. In the august court of the Areopagus, the most celebrated

tribunal in the world, such a convinced sinner was never seen, until Paul of Tarsus proclaimed the holiness of the unknown God; then Dyonisius was convinced, and trembled.

III. Jesus Christ is the wisdom and power of God, to subdue the hearts of men to himself.

At his name every knee shall bow. All his disciples shall yield him their voluntary homage. He will make his people willing in the day of his power. They shall be willing that he should reign, that his counsel should stand, that he should do all his pleasure. He will make them willing to be in his hands. as clay in the hands of the potter.

His word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword. He lays the victim at his feet. Prostrate in the dust, he cries, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do." I am entirely at thy disposal. Any thing which thou requirest I will do. I am not my own. I am bought with a price. I will submit to my trial, I will bear my cross.'

Now travel beyond the limits of Christianity. Go beyond the sound of the gospel, and see if you can discover such a temper. Listen. Do you hear such language. Visit the great, and the learned. Behold Belshazzar. He is pale, he trembles, his joints shake with terrour. A luxurious banquet is before him, but he cannot eat; the wine sparkles, but he cannot drink. He hears not the music of the song. He calls for his wise men, but he does not submit to God.

Repair to the palace of Pharaoh, enter his splendid apartment, observe the anguish of his spirit. He speaks. What does he say? Does he submit to God,

under the terrours of his judgments? His language is, "I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice."

Mingle in the throng around the throne of Herod. Witness the sparkling rapture of his countenance, while the mob shout, "It is the voice of a God and not of a man." Had he been educated in the school of Christ, he would have taught the impious rabble another lesson. Like Paul and Silas, he would have cried, "I am a man of like passions," I am a miserable sinner.

It is only by the gospel that men are brought to bow and submit to the authority of God.

IV. Jesus Christ is the wisdom and power of God, in sanctifying his people, and preparing them for glory.

Here revelation stands alone. Here Christianity triumphs without a competitor. She accomplishes what no other religion attempts. In pagan worship, it was no part of the design to reform the worshipper. Their temples glittered on the mountains, their priests prepared the sacrifice, the victim bled, the altars smoked, the people bowed, but no contrition suffused their eyes with tears, no sighs of repentance burst from their hearts, no raptures of gratitude burst from their lips. Religious worship among pagans, is not considered a means to produce an effect on the worshippers, but when the rite is performed, the end is accomplished. It is merely a religion of ceremonies.

But Jesus Christ is like the refiner's fire, to purge his people from their sins. The law of the Lord is

pure, converting the soul. He hath sanctified his people with his own blood. They are a holy priesthood. He sometimes elevates his people with such energy of character, that they can do all things.

Is a temple to be built? A church to be organized? A city to be raised from rubbish and ruins? Ezra, and Nehemiah shall by the Spirit of God be awakened, and strengthened, for the work.

Is a world to be enlightened and saved? The inspiration of the Almighty, the voice of Jesus Christ, shall summon Paul of Tarsus, and Luther, and Buchanan, and a thousand faithful missionaries, who shall go forth with more than mere mortal power.

Are the sons of Canaan, the children of Africa, to be delivered from the miseries of slavery? Is the land of Ham to burst her chains? The Spirit of God shall come on a Clarkson, a Wilberforce, and a holy brotherhood of worthies, who shall move the British nation, who shall move all the nations of christendom, who shall persuade the world, to unite in the benevolent design of suppressing the traffic in human blood.

Are wars to cease? Will the lion and the lamb lie down together? Will swords be turned to ploughshares? Is this glorious era rolling on? Is the star of Bethlehem again rising? Are the angels again raising the song, 'Peace on earth?'

Then, moved by the Spirit of God, men from the east, and the west, will unite in Peace societies. Ministers of the gospel will recollect that they are ministers of the Prince of peace. The pulpit and the press will resound with strains of peace.

Jesus Christ is the wisdom and power of God, to prepare his people for more severe trials, than any of these arduous enterprises. He prepares them for affliction, for death. In these circumstances, his friends are often not only supported, but comforted. They rejoice. They triumph. What a blessing is this, in a world where all suffer, where all die. Here paganism is miserable. Her philosophers have some brilliant thoughts, some sublime conceptions, some exalted hopes, but in the moment of affliction and death, they vanish, as meteors of the night. In their personal and domestic troubles, you hear not a word of divine providence, not a word of their dependance, not a word of God. In such scenes, miserable comforters were they all.

How different was the language of St. Paul, going to his martyrdom. "I know in whom I have believed. I am ready to depart. I desire to depart to be with Christ."

Is not Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, to prepare his people for affliction, for death, and for glory?

REFLECTIONS.

From the subject we are able to account, for the immense moral improvement, which is visible in all those countries where Christianity has prevailed.

That those countries have made conspicuous improvements, since they have received the gospel, none acquainted with their history will doubt. That there

is now a marked difference in point of moral elevation, between Christian, and Pagan or Mahometan countries, is unquestionably certain.

The increasing intercourse of nations, their friendly commerce, the cultivation of the arts, the extending empire of knowledge, are not the cause of this moral improvement. These advantages have been attained in an eminent degree, in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as they have in modern India, and China, without any material improvements in morals, without banishing one idol from their temples, one vice from private life.

Christianity therefore is the mighty agent, in this work of reformation. Increasing civilization, and the arts themselves, have been extensively the effect of Christianity. These benign friends of human felicity have generally followed the steps of the gospel, taken up their abode with her, and become her humble handmaids, in consummating the improvements which she had commenced.

As the gospel advances over the world, she expels some of the greatest miseries, some of the vilest passions, some of the most odious vices. She displays the sublimest virtues, and introduces the richest consolations, of the human heart. Before the gentle voice of the Redeemer had been heard, revenge was thought a virtue, and humility a vice. The gods were worshipped by intemperance and crimes. Where he is now unknown, the ambitious do not conceal their treachery and assassinations. The tribunals of justice openly practice bribery, extortion, and rapine.

This is true of those countries once blest with the gospel, who have banished it from their coasts, Egypt, Palestine and Greece.

In the beginning of the Roman commonwealth, creditors might sell their debtors, or put them to death. They might divide the body into as many parts as there were creditors, and each take his share according to the sum demanded.

Persecution has been considered the right of the party in power. The time has been, when the question was not whether persecution was proper, but who should have the power to persecute.

Whenever the government have had the power of enforcing universal conformity in faith or worship, or have given this power to the priesthood, they have universally persecuted the minority. By gradual, by slow degrees, the people have learned not to commit this power to their rulers, temporal, or spiritual, and the day of persecution, of prisons, and fires, has gone by. If any party feud, or polemic asperity remain, it is only as the harmless ripples of the ocean, after a night of shipwreck and storm. The reformation of Martin Luther gave persecution her deadly blow. He fixed the great principle that "the bible is the religion of Protestants," that creeds and confessions have no authority, but for those who voluntarily subscribe them, that they are of no use, but as systematic views of revelation.

Now, men of different communions greet each other as brethren. Bible societies, and other christian associations, are conveying the news of salvation to

the remotest tribes of men. The gospel is becoming the bond of union between kings and their subjects of all denominations.

Slavery was once universal among the nations. Now the principal governments of christendom have united in treaties and laws to suppress this mischief.

Before Christianity had enlightened and softened the hearts of men, war, terrible as it now is, was far more terrible. Prisoners were made slaves, or sacrificed, or eaten, as a banquet of victory. But now, efforts are making, to extinguish the fires of war. We have such faith in the divine promise, as to believe that these efforts will be successful. Though the Holy Alliance should prove to be an unholy combination, though the carnage of war should again cover the earth, still the work of peace will proceed. The Peace societies in Europe and America, are gradually enlightening the world. They are reforming the popular Christianity which permits war, and calling her back to the doctrine of her divine Author, who taught that his kingdom was not of this world, and that his disciples *would not fight.*

Christianity shall be purified from the gross corruption which has almost universally prevailed, that Christians may engage in war. The noise of battle shall cease, the Saviour will not forfeit his character, as Prince of peace. Would the ministers of Jesus only put forth their influence, not another peal of artillery would ever in this country be heard from the ramparts of war.

To what powerful influence shall we ascribe the present wonderful impulse of benevolence given to mankind?

No electric flash has passed from pole to pole, no earthquake has overturned the cities or mountains of the world, no comet has sailed through the heavens, proclaiming famine or pestilence, yet the world is roused. As the Spirit of God moved on chaos, producing order and beauty, so the Spirit of Christ is moving the minds of men. The heralds of peace, like good angels, are visiting every nation under the sun. The object is vast and sublime, to enlighten, and sanctify, and save the world. Is not this eminently the work of Christ "travelling in the greatness of his strength," having the wisdom and the power of God? Kings and conquerors mingle in his train. His church is looking forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon, the Gentiles are coming to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

The work will prosper, until every nation, as trees of the forest, shall bow at the name of Jesus, until every village of the world shall resound with hosannas to the Son of David.

It is the gospel which makes man *man*, which raises him to his highest glory. Under the influence of christian principles, the judgment is the most correct, the power of reason the most vigorous, the capacity for improvement the most enlarged, the imagination the most lofty, the motives the most sublime. The most perfect husbandmen and artizans have been Christians, the most profound philosophers have been

Christians, the most powerful orators have been Christians, the most sublime poets have been Christians, The greatest benefactors of the human race, the founders of hospitals and seminaries of science, the founders of Missionary societies, of Bible and Peace societies, have been the humble disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore hold fast what ye hear, and be Christians, not only in name, but in life and character.

You believe the gospel. Is it possible then that you should neglect this great salvation? You have no time to be wasted. While you are hearing, the season of your probation is passing away. Transient and momentary may be your future opportunities. Soon, soon, you must go the way of all the earth. Soon you will hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, the heavens passing away with a great noise. Whose heart can endure, whose hand be strong, in this day of the Lord? Who will be able to stand? The humble Christian will even then lift up his head and rejoice. His redemption draweth nigh. He approaches mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, and God the Judge of all.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

JOB xviii, 14.

And it shall bring him to the king of terrours.

DEATH is the king of terrours. To all classes of men, death is a melancholy theme; yet in this theme, all have a deep concern. Certain subjects are more appropriately addressed to particular classes of persons, but death addresses itself to all. The fell tyrant enters the lofty mansion, and the humble cottage; the cell of the hermit, the seminary of science, the temple of religion, and the castle of the murderous warriour. With the same stern visage, he arrests the sickle of the husbandman, the hammer of the artizan, and dashes crowns and sceptres in the dust.

At the approach of death, tottering age trembles with new weakness; proud ambition is appalled in its splendid career; youthful gaiety forgets her transports; the votaries of riot loathe the festal board; the splendour of wealth loses its charm. We have seen no other world: we have formed no other connexions:

we have enjoyed no other felicities; here our desires centre; our affections are strong; and life is dear to the soul. Reasons for this love of life, this dread and horrour of falling into the grave; of going we know not where, of being we know not what, are numerous. I proceed to state some of them.

I. The pleasant circumstances of life sometimes render death terrible.

Though some men seem to be born to trouble; yet this is not the condition of all. Most men have many pleasant days; many have, on the whole, prosperous and happy lives. The vine of mortality, although it bear sour grapes, has some pleasant branches, some delicious clusters. With only a moderate share of general success, life is valuable.

In cheerful youth, parents, brethren, and companions, are dear to the heart. The possessions and comforts of life are embraced with intense ardour and delight. They have not manifested their emptiness and uncertainty. In the freshness of enjoyment, the mind magnifies these objects, and throws around them a drapery of gaudy colours, promising rich felicity.

In advanced life, the prospect is extended; friends are more numerous; reputation and property increase; wife, and children, and children's children, enliven every scene, and give a charm to the domestic circle; attachments are multiplied; the cords which bind us to life, become stronger and stronger; habits are confirmed; enjoyments are more substantial and satisfactory, the world more valuable, life more precious, death a greater evil. Whatever endears life, renders the grave more dismal.

When a man is prosperous and contented; when his employment furnishes, not only the necessaries, but the comforts, and some of the luxuries of life; when his dwelling is convenient, his land fertile, his table loaded, and his cup is full; when his creditors know not the way to his house, and the physician is a stranger; when his friends resort to him, and his apartments echo the voice of kindness, is not his life precious? His good name, like the perfume of precious ointment, extends around him. When he appears in public, every honest eye views him with respect, every tongue, on which dwells the law of kindness, speaks his praise; he labours, he reads, he travels, or executes business, as most promotes his comfort, his profit, or his usefulness. What is more, he executes his purposes, he accomplishes his labours. Happy is such a father; happy are his children; happy the wife, devoted to his welfare; happy are his friends; but, oh, how terrible the hour of his dissolution! He is torn from friends, torn from possessions, from all the delights of life. What sorrow, what anguish, can be compared with this?

II. Death is the king of terrours, in destroying all the plans and future hopes of this world.

The schemes and hopes of men are numerous; they are, generally, full of life, and vigour, and zeal. Their projects are various, their toils persevering. With more than a painter's skill, they clothe future scenes in the colours of delight, and admiration. Death ruins all.

In the grave, is no work, nor device, nor knowledge. It is the dull mansion of forgetfulness and slumber.

To the enterprising parent, how dismal the prospect. He is labouring to render his family happy and prosperous. For this he watches, and plants, and builds, and trades, and adds field to field. But while he is laying the foundation of their hopes, while the work is his toil by day, his dream by night, his strength fails, his expectations perish; he leaves his family in a stormy world, without a patron, without a guide.

In the death of the husband, or the wife, the worldly hopes of both are blasted. Their day of joy is followed by a night of distress. Their children and their secular affairs occupied their thoughts, and too far banished God, and eternal things, from their remembrance. The olive plants, about their tables, were more pleasant to them, than the rose of Sharon, than the blossoms of Paradise. But instead of social bliss, and increasing domestic pleasures, one sinks in the cold waters of death, the other is shipwrecked on a desolate coast, to weep and grieve alone.

In the sprightliness of youth, we form towering schemes of worldly felicity. We expect to exercise sound discretion, to form the wisest plans, and perseverance to execute them with success. We expect faithful friends, a pure reputation, unmixed pleasure, and abundant wealth. At such a flattering period, how terrible to be torn from life, from felicities, which in imagination are so certainly to be acquired, so easily enjoyed. Such a youth, so strong is the illusion, hardly believes that he is in danger; still less that his danger is imminent; that his complaints are fatal. He is surprised at the admonitions of his friends, he neglects their advice, he ban-

ishes fear, till it is too late to hope. Then, perhaps, he awakes as from a dream; he inquires if nothing can be done; he looks, he wishes, he sighs, he despairs, he dies!

The votary of appetite, and sensual indulgence, meets, in death, the king of terrours. He expected a long course of pleasure; he resolved to balance his secret fears with new scenes of jollity; to throw off the weary yoke of self-denial, to refuse no delight, to riot in all the luxuries of sense. While he is smiling at the fears of those, who dare not indulge like him; while every thought is pleasure, every sound music, and every hope transport, death, like a sturdy officer comes to murder his pleasures, to hasten him to the awful silence of the grave. Where now are his gay schemes, his transient hopes, his momentary delights, his noisy revels, his mirthful songs? They are exchanged for the dreary horrours of death, the terrific darkness of the grave, the unknown terrours of the spiritual world.

Who has not seen death arrayed in terrour to the man toiling for wealth? To him, property appears in all its importance, and generally it is very important. For this he exerts all his powers. At present he conceives his possessions are too limited to be enjoyed. When they have risen to a certain measure, he proposes to indulge in pleasure, to exhibit his affluence in the splendour of his living. But ere this day of joyful anticipation arrives, his strength fails, fever kindles in his veins, and he hears a voice, "This night thy soul is required." To him, is not death the king of terrours?

Behold the man of science. His education, his talents, and his friends, flatter his hopes. His exertions are roused, his zeal is kindled, his ambition is inflamed; he anticipates, he claims, he assumes, a conspicuous place in society. He sacrifices rest and ease; he denies himself all amusement; he refuses no labour. Feeble with confinement, pale with study, he is an easy prey of disease. Death knocks at his door. His extensive science, his splendid hopes, vanish for ever; his worldly schemes are lost in the grave. Death is the king of terrours.

III. A conviction that we have not done what we might to prepare for death, may render it the king of terrours.

I speak not of those persons, whose crimes sometimes alarm the spirit, and harrow up the soul, and terrify the conscience, making life miserable, and death terrible; but I refer to that worldly temper, that indifference to divine things, with which even good men, in some degree, are chargeable, which leave the heart unprepared for a better world. Most men, and indeed, all men of any moral sensibility, have a serious conviction, of not having feared God, or loved God, as they ought. They have not fled to the mercy of God, or the atonement of the Saviour, as they ought; but have remained deaf to his calls, when knocking at their door, "his head wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night." They know that they have not cherished, but resisted, the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Most men have a distinct remembrance, that they have been worldly in their affections, selfish in their views, forgetting God, and forgetting their

own souls. They remember that in a thousand instances, they have forsaken their own mercies, been intemperate in their passions, wicked in their indulgences. They know that they have neglected prayer, and faith, humility, and that holy walk with God, which give hope, and courage, in death, and dispel the darkness of the grave. This conviction of guilt, makes the soul shrink back from death, and recoil from the presence of God. A violated law, a neglected gospel, an abused Saviour, shroud the grave in hideous darkness, render death the king of terrours. In such an hour, the heart exclaims, "Had I been as devout, and faithful, and obedient, as I ought, I might now look up to God, with unmixed confidence, as my Father, and Saviour; but, alas, my sins make me tremble with a fearful expectation of a judgment to come."

IV. The mere uncertainty of what may be the consequences may render death very terrible.

The person, it may be, has had some feeble faith or hope of the divine favour, and immortal felicity. Still he has not "peace and assurance." Apprehending the approach of the last enemy, he looks into his heart, and finds much to condemn; he does not know but the moment of his dissolution may reveal him to the world of spirits, as a graceless hypocrite; he does not know but in that moment, he may open his eyes among lost spirits, hear Judas cursing the day in which he was born, and the rich man crying for a drop of water to cool his tongue. He does not know, but he himself may manifest their temper, and imitate their example, and, in the day of judgment,

be cast into everlasting fire. The mere uncertainty of this vast concern may fill the mind with anxiety and distress, and render death the king of terrours.

V. That nothing more can be done for the salvation of the soul after death, is enough to fill the mind with anxiety, and render the event dreadful.

It is, I think, evidently taught in Scripture, that in the day of judgment, men will be examined only respecting the conduct of this life; they will be rewarded or punished according to the deeds done in the body. This life, then, is the only period of probation, the only time to make our calling and election sure. During life, the gospel and its ordinances are of immense value; in death, they are forever lost. The value of those instructions, which convey light, and grace, and comfort to the soul, cannot be estimated. The word of the Lord is a pearl of great price, more precious than rubies. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy to all people. The hour is dreadful, which takes these means of salvation from the departing soul. When this moment arrives, mercy will no longer be offered, the volumes of life will no longer be open, the gospel will be heard no more, the Holy Spirit will no longer strive, the day of mercy is past. When this moment arrives, the hopes of the soul perish, the very thought of salvation is gone, secret religion, public worship, acts of charity, faith, and hope, all come to an end. In death the man loses the instructions of parents and friends, the admonitions of neighbours, the exhortations of ministers. He will never hear another sermon, he will never attend another sacrament, never read another passage

in the book of life. The means of salvation are lost.

Could he return from death, to feed the poor, to visit the sick, to devote himself to God, death might be less terrible. Could he rise from the grave, to be more constant and devout in his prayers, to be more attentive, and teachable, in hearing the gospel, more diligent in obeying, more zealous in supporting it, death might not be the king of terrours. Could he awake from the cold sleep of death, only one hour, for prayer, for repentance, and faith in Jesus, death might not be the king of terrours. But in death, the sweet, the mediatorial hour is past.

VI. The pains and natural evils of death often render it most terrible.

Here I need say nothing of the widow's anguish, or the orphan's woes, of the parent's blasted hopes, or the tears and lamentations of the brothers and sisters, when those, who are bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, are taken from them. The loss of the survivors is often irreparable, their affliction inconsolable and overwhelming.

I say nothing of the afflicting sickness, which generally precedes dissolution, of the burning, restless fever, of the chilling, wasting consumption, of the aches, and pains, and distresses, which wear away the strength, and exhaust life. I say nothing of the irksome, loathsome remedies, nothing of the anxious days, and wakeful nights, of the heart-rending discouragements, of the alternate hopes and terrours, and final despair of life, so full of anguish and agony as often to render death itself desirable, death itself a

relief to the best friends. Their sympathetic distress and terrour are, frequently, undescribably affecting. The dying man often sees and feels their anguish, as well as his own. The tears of neighbours, the sighs and lamentations of the family, wife, children, and friends, often increase the misery of the departing spirit. While his heart is breaking with his own sufferings, while his agony is insupportable, and soul and body are parting, he is oppressed and agitated, and terrified, with the consternation which fills the room. Who has not witnessed scenes like this? Who will not witness them again, when the last summons shall reach some beloved friend? Restless, speechless, his sufferings and wants cannot be known. To moisten his lip, to wait the dread issue in awful silence, or with tears and sighs of anguish, is the sad office of the family. The breathing difficult and laborious, the sound gives warning, that the last hour has come. The powers of nature, sometimes, roused to their last effort, prolong the struggle; the contest is only lengthened agony and despair, till death reaches the vital powers, and the victim yields to the all-conquering tyrant. The last, last effort, of a dying friend, dissolves the heart. If disciplined in wo, if inured to suffering, a heart-moving silence seals the lips of the survivors; but if unaccustomed to such scenes, if not familiar with anguish and misery, a burst of tears, and loud lamentations, proclaim the greatness of their loss, and their heart-rending grief. They look at those eyes, once sparkling with delight, or melting with tenderness, which never will open again: at those lips, which never again will charm

the soul with the accents of love and benevolence, at the visage, which was lighted up with a thousand beauties, diffusing cheerfulness and pleasure around, now pale and ghastly. That lovely frame, those beautiful limbs, which moved with grace, gladdening every beholder, must now be wrapt in the attire of the grave, be buried in the earth, food for worms. Oh death, thou art the king of terrours; a hideous tyrant, crushing the race of man! May God hasten the time, when thou shalt die, and man shall triumph.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The subject teaches us the dreadful evil of sin.

Sin is the source of all our wo. By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passes upon all, because all have sinned. Sin commissions the pestilence to assail the human family. The fell tyrant renders cities and countries desolate. Sin loads the fields of battle with the dead, crimsons it with blood, and destroys the hope of man. Sin arms disease and death with irresistible power. All the pain and misery in the universe is the fruit of sin. While the pair of Eden were pure and sinless, while entire obedience marked their conduct, neither pain, nor grief, nor fear, nor anxiety, was ever known. For them the heavens smiled without a threatening cloud; for them the rivers of God, refreshed the bowers of paradise; for them each plant and flower perfumed the air. The whole universe joined in concert to gladden their hearts, and satisfy their wishes. The beauties of earth, and glories of heaven, directed

their minds to God, and bade them rejoice. Entirely innocent, every thought was joy. In this scene of holy obedience and ravishing delight, they saw, they desired, they seized, the forbidden fruit. As they tore it from the tree, the world was wrapped in gloom; the heavens were astonished; the angels forsook the walks of Eden, disease and death received commission to destroy every living creature; God drove the sinners from the tree of life. Sin scatters sickness in all our families; sin fills the grave yard with the dead; and hell, with the wailings of despair.

II. Is it not a heavenly employment, to aid others in their preparation for death?

Probably, more in this way may be done than is generally supposed. Human minds have vast influence over one another. Children commonly think their parents wise and good. This gives them an almost irresistible sway over their minds. As the tender twig is bent, so their minds are directed.

Not only then devote your children to God, give them to him in solemn covenant; but let them enjoy thy pious examples, thy serious advice, thy fervent prayers. Not only give them an early education, according to your circumstances and their capacities; but guard them against the contagion of vicious society, put suitable books into their hands, which may enlighten their minds, and affect their hearts, and influence their lives. Secure to them sound instruction in the school, and the house of God.

Those who are teachers in schools and seminaries are generally believed by their pupils to be great and learned. This gives importance to what you recom-

mend, renders your religious instructions impressive, your good examples almost irresistible. Lovers, friends, and neighbours, often possess unknown influence over each other's minds. Were all this influence combined, and exerted to aid each other in preparation for death, what a harvest of felicity might follow.

You love your child, your pupil, your friend; you are afraid he will be lost; his terrours of conscience, in a dying hour, may wring your heart with anguish; his despairing cries to rocks and mountains, in the day of judgment, may overwhelm your spirit with commiseration. Now then, in health prove your love, exert your influence to prepare him for his last, last hour, that he may die in peace, that holy angels may hover round his dying pillow, to bear his spirit to the bosom of his God. They who turn others to righteousness, shall shine as stars of glory forever and ever.

III. We learn the value and excellence of Christian faith.

Death is a great evil, a terrible foe; but Christian faith triumphs over his power. Though guilty, though dying, the Christian may hope and rejoice. Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him. His promise to them is, "I will ransom you from the power of the grave, I will redeem you from death. Oh death, I will be thy plagues; Oh grave, I will be thy destruction. 'I am the resurrection and the life.'"

If the Christian knows himself, he knows in whom he has believed, and that he is well able to keep what he has committed to him, till the day of judgment. He may well say, "Though he slay me, I will

trust in him. I am ready to depart. I would not live always." Are not such persons blest and happy? Only a little lower than angels, they aspire to their glory. A kind parent calls the believer, and often he is willing to go. He knows that God is the most suitable judge of the time and circumstances of his departure; he submits, and is composed. He gives up his schemes of worldly prosperity, and the numerous pleasures around him; he forgets the darkness of the grave, and the agonies of dissolution, in view of approaching glory.

By an eye of faith, he sees heaven open, and Jesus standing on the right hand of the father. Devoutly he cries, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." "Oh death, where is thy sting; Oh grave, where is thy victory." "When shall I die; when shall I live forever."

IV. The subject admonishes us very seriously to prepare for the severe, overwhelming trial of a dying hour.

Recollect the vanity of worldly hopes. Often, your success only disappoints your expectation. Our very wishes give us not our wish. In prosperity, man sometimes wakes, and finds himself undone. From death none are excused. Where are David, and Solomon, and Paul, and Jesus? Where are many of your best friends? Let death be familiar to your thoughts; this may prevent surprise in a dying hour. Let the rest of your pillow remind you of the long slumber of the grave. Let the morning light remind you of the resurrection, and the day of judgment. Life is a garden, in which grows the tree of life; we may reach

the branches; we may gather the fruit. Life is a short period, in which we may acquire the inheritance of saints, the crown of glory, the felicity of angels, mansions in heaven. Would it not be wise to take death into all your calculations? When you plant, when you build, when you buy, or sell, or labour, or amuse yourselves, would it not be wise, to ask your heart what probable influence this may have on your last moments, and your future hopes? Would not this temper your wishes, moderate your passions? Would it not be wise to become more particular, more fervent, more frequent in your devotion? Is it not a duty of self-preservation, to be more broken hearted in your repentance, more devout, more humble, more teachable, more intimate with God, more engaged in his cause, and your own salvation?

Is it not wise, more seriously to consider the rapid flight of your days, the uncertainty of a moment? Death is the king of terrours. But exercising Christian faith and hope, to die is gain. We escape from sin, and remorse, and distress, from disappointment and danger. We pass from the bed of death, to mingle with the righteous, to unite with angels, in the presence of God. Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. *Amen.*

SERMON XVI.

PSALM cxix, 18.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

The prayers of a man are a good index of his religious character. As a man prayeth, so is he; such is the moral state of his heart. He spontaneously prays for what he desires and loves. If he asks for wisdom, it is evidence that he is a lover of wisdom.

This most excellent psalm is a wonderful strain of devotion. The Greek Fathers consider it "an abridgment of David's life, in which he expresses all the states through which he had passed, the trials, persecutions, succours, and encouragements, he had received." The Latin Fathers perceive in it, "all the morality of the gospel, and rules of conduct for every situation in life." Cassiodorus asserts "that it contains the sentiments of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, of every age."

The text is a prayer, expressing an humble heart, a love of truth, a sense of dependence. "Open thou

mine eyes, that I may discover wondrous things out of thy law." Law, in this place, means the word of God, or the whole volume of revelation.

Doctrine. In ascertaining the truths of revelation, we ought to pray for divine assistance.

The plainest truths, which are universally believed, require the authority of revelation, to command our faith. "Through faith in the divine oracles, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." How much more do we need divine illumination, to believe the doctrine of the apostacy, of a Redeemer, of an atonement, of a new birth, of a resurrection to immortal life? But I proceed to show how reasonable is the petition of the text, or to enforce the duty of praying for divine assistance in ascertaining the truths of the Bible.

I. In the scriptures are wonderful truths; therefore, should we repeat the prayer of the text.

If things wonderful were not in the word of God, such a prayer would be useless; but they are more than can be reckoned up in order. In revelation, we see the glorious system of the universe rising from nothing, the sea and dry land separated, the sun ruling the day, the moon the night. We see man, the offspring of God, holding the sceptre of this world.

> "Here we behold how infant time began,
> "How the dust moved, and quickened into man,
> "Eternal bliss thro' pleasing pages trace,
> "And find salvation in the paths of grace."

We hear the law announced in the bowers of Eden. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." In rebellion against his Maker, we see man

put forth his hand and eat. We see him driven from his paradise of joy; briars and thorns start up before him; he is compelled to glean his subsistence by the sweat of his brow, disease, and death, and a thousand woes, following in the train.

From Jehovah we hear a voice, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." In the fulness of time he appears, made of a woman. He makes propitiation for sin, is a sacrifice for a lost world; the author of eternal life to all who believe. His spirit he pours out, and blesses the labours of his ministers; myriads of sons and daughters are born for glory; those who were dead in trespasses and sins become kings and priests of God; Heaven receives an accession of inhabitants from our dying world.

These, and many more, are wonderful things of revelation. They deserve our regard, our most profound inquiry; they are subjects, which angels examine with deep attention. Here is a field, which may give ample scope to the most extensive science, to the most powerful intellects. Contemplating such a prospect, we may well pray, "Open thou our eyes, that we may discover wonderful things in thy law." Enlighten us, that we may understand these glorious themes.

II. The prayer of the text is our duty, because it is immensely important for us to understand the things of the law.

If the subjects of revelation were uninteresting, or of trivial consequence, to neglect such an application to heaven, might be more excusable. But the truths of revelation are more important than any worldly good, fame, wealth, or power. They are the only

charter of our immortal hopes,—the only lights to guide us to heavenly bliss. But unless they are understood, they are useless, as though they were in their original tongues.

What is the compass to the man, who understands not the pointing of the needle. What is a guide-board to a traveller, who cannot read the words and figures inscribed. If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

Bibles, sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, are all useless, unless they are understood. If then God has made prayer one means of illumination, we ought to pray for divine assistance to understand the sacred oracles.

The truths of revelation involve all that is important, all that is glorious, or terrible to man. The best hopes of this life; consolation or agony in a dying hour; immortal blessedness or eternal misery in the world to come, are all suspended on our understanding the truths of the gospel. Shall we not then pray, that we may understand their wondrous glories? They preserve us from idolatry, guilt, and death;—they make us wise unto salvation.

III. The natural indifference or sluggishness of the human mind is a reason, why we should pray for divine assistance in our religious inquiries.

A celebrated writer has pronounced sloth to be the constitutional sin of human nature. Men love to idle away life in sensual indulgence. Necessity excites them to labour, or to meditation. They need some powerful agent, to excite, to awaken, to animate and engage, their spirits. They love to slumber; they

are habitually pleading for a little more sleep, a little more slumber. Of spiritual sleep, this is more emphatically true. How many bibles are read, how many sermons are heard, how many peals of eloquence arrest the senses and chain the attention, while the wicked hearts of the hearers are unmoved, while their purposes are not changed, while their evil consciences are not awakened, while the still slumbers of spiritual death are not disturbed.

What can alarm, what can awaken, what can rouse them to read, to search, and understand the oracles of truth? Not the kind advice of friends, not the sage maxims of philosophy, not the orthodox opinions of theology, not the loudest tones of fiery zeal. The Spirit of God, and nothing but the Spirit of God, will rouse and engage the heart, to seek for religious wisdom, as for hidden treasure. The Spirit of God is a rushing wind, a penetrating fire, to enlighten the mind, to melt the heart. Shall we not then cry for his gracious influence, that we may behold wondrous things in the law of the Lord.

IV. Some have misunderstood the truths of the bible; this is a strong reason why you should offer the prayer of the text.

If others have fatally mistaken the doctrines of the bible, it certainlyis possible that you may. If others have been lost for want of caution and prayer, have you not reason to be considerate, and concerned for yourself? You are exposed to the same temptations; you are liable to the same prejudices; you possess the same mental imbecility with other men; therefore, you may be in danger of adopting the same or similar

errours. Who then will presume to say, "I am secure from dangerous errours." May I not ask without any just reason of offence, whether some persons of as much native genius, of as liberal an education, of more distinguished privileges, and apparently, of equal integrity, have not fatally, or dangerously, mistaken the truths of revelation? Is not this a reason for you to be careful, and circumspect, and anxious, to know the truth? Not only ignorant and weak men, but men of understanding, great and learned men, have adopted gross errours, mistaking the grand design of the gospel. To confirm this, I need only mention what you all very well know, that some great and learned men have understood and believed in direct opposition to other great and learned men. One class must be materially wrong.

If two men adopt opposite creeds, it is not possible that both should agree with the bible. You cannot explain away the difference. One man believes human nature is debased and depraved; another says, no. One believes that all men must be born again; another limits such a change to pagans. One believes that the impenitent will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire; his neighbour believes that all men will be finally happy. One bows before Jesus Christ as the mighty God; his fellow worshipper views him only as an excellent man. Who can unite these opposite creeds? Who can harmonize these jarring opinions? One class is infallibly wrong; their faith is the baseless fabric of a vision, they believe with the multitude, or adopt the phantoms of their own imaginations. Yet both enrol the names of men, prudent, discreet, learned,

and wise. Does not this illustrate and confirm the importance, and the necessity of divine assistance in forming our opinions of gospel doctrines? Where great men and mighty have stumbled and fallen, shall we not humbly feel, and devoutly acknowledge our danger, crying, "Lord, open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

V. The dislike, which men feel towards truths of the bible, renders it needful for them to pray for divine assistance.

I could easily, to my own satisfaction, make out a catalogue of truths, with abundant proof that they are unwelcome to irreligious men. Respecting some of them, I think all reflecting men would be agreed; but I have time only to refer you to the general declaration of Jesus Christ, which is amply sufficient for my purpose. "Light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." They love errour; they are averse to the truth. Will such persons spontaneously perceive the evidence, and believe the truths, of divine revelation; or must they be convinced and compelled by the Spirit of God?

This aversion to truth must give the heart a strong bias towards errour and delusion, and shows the propriety of the psalmist's prayer. Men readily believe what they love to hear. Evidence of what is unpleasant, if it be not invincible, they are wont to resist and reject. No dream of night is more fallacious, than the opinion, that no praise or blame is attached to belief or faith. It is built on the groundless notion, that all men necessarily believe according to evidence. Why then do men so often think more highly of themselves,

and of their children, and of their possessions, than do their neighbours? Why do men more readily believe ill reports of their enemies, than of their friends? He is yet far from knowing what is in man, he has yet to learn one of the most common operations of the human mind, who does not ascribe moral worth to a sound faith, who does not perceive that aversion to gospel truth is a dangerous cause of errour and delusion. Where is the man, so teachable, so pure, so good, as to say, "I have always loved the truth, believed and obeyed the truth. The law of the Lord has always been my delight?"

VI. Facts have proved that divine assistance is necessary, and should therefore be sought, that even good men may understand the revelation of God. Who then will excuse himself from this prayer of David. Some real difficulties lie in the way of clearly understanding revealed truth. We are conversant with objects of sense. Through them we receive our knowledge. The law of God embraces abstract subjects; it has reference to a spiritual world, and to spiritual duties, to the soul, and to God. A doctrine is to be collected from various texts, written in different languages and ages, while other texts have a different aspect.

Where no real difficulty exists, the natural imbecility of the mind, or some prejudice, or some temporary aberration of thought, may prevent the perception of the most plain and palpable truth. Jesus Christ explicitly told his disciples, that he should go to Jerusalem, that he should there be delivered to the Gentiles, that they would kill him, and that he would rise again

the third day. What could be more plain? Yet they understood him not. When all these things took place, a short time after, they were surprized, they were alarmed. They despaired; they fled; they abandoned his cause. When he arose, this was equally incredible. Yet, a few days after, when the Holy Spirit enlightened their minds, they clearly understood these things, and Peter and the other apostles explained them to the congregations of Jerusalem, with so much perspicuity, and energy, and pathos, that thousands were added to the church. Is it strange then, that all humble men offer the petition of the psalmist?

Very few persons will flatter themselves that they have more vigourous minds, more intellectual attainments, more elevated piety, more talents for gaining religious truth. If he found such a prayer needful for him, is it not then more needful for you? If he was deeply affected with the danger of errour and delusion, if his mind laboured with many things hard to be understood, if he was humbled with the profound mysteries of godliness, and in the oppression of his heart exclaimed, "Open thou mine eyes," how much more need you to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead your mind into all truth.

REFLECTIONS.

I. From the subject I infer, that a man is as really bound to adopt a correct faith, as to live an upright life.

In whatever light you view the subject, you will never be able to see that opinions are neutral in their

moral character. They have a most powerful influence on our conduct. They are generally the parents of action. Let a man adopt the opinion, that you have no right to believe any thing, which is not contained in his creed, and he will not only be uncharitable and censorious, but he will persecute you—if he can, if he dare. If you plead for the importance of *actions*, then I say, that thoughts, and opinions are equally important; for when a man thinks, he as truly performs an act, as when he visits the sick. When a man believes, it is his act, which has a moral character, as really as any other act.

The moral character of a man, whether it be good, or bad, as truly rests on his thoughts, as his actions. He exercises his fidelity, his candour, his regard to truth, his obedience, as much as in a life of pure morals. A man is as really wicked to think wrong, as to act wrong. His erroneous faith is as really wrong, as his immoral life. In the text, David does not pray God to direct his course of actions, but to enlighten his mind, that he may understand the truths of revelation. Teach me what to believe of God, and his Son, of man, of heaven, and hell. "As a man thinketh, so is he." As the complexion of his thoughts, and opinions, such is his real character.

II. If just views of truth, and divine influences, are so important, I infer the danger of party spirit.

The spirit of party diverts the mind from the only standard of divine truth. Party views erect another standard, the opinion of their founder. He is the oracle of their faith. If they can acquire his supposed luminous views, his elevated sentiments, his

spiritual consolations, they feel secure of the divine favour. When a man will not, or dare not, think for himself, nor decide, and believe, independently of a party, he is merely the satellite of a greater body, doomed to move as he moves, and change as he changes. Then the place where he happens to reside, the company with whom he may associate, the books he may read, or some other fortuitous circumstance, will decide the nature of his faith, and his character, and perhaps his future existence. If you once imbibe the infatuation of party zeal, no doctrine will be too foolish to gain your belief, no practice too absurd for your approbation, no leader too visionary for you to follow. Neglecting to pray for divine influences, giving yourself up to the direction of your party, you lose your individuality of character; you are a cypher added to the sum total of your party.

III. If we need divine influences, to understand speculative truth, do we not still more to perform the practical duties of life?

If we need divine light, to understand the doctrines of religion, who will not pray for spiritual strength to execute the self-denying and arduous duties of a religious life? Where is the man so replenished with heavenly grace, so fortified with holy resolutions, that he is sure of being always deaf to the songs of sensual delight, always blind to the enchantment of alluring temptation? In view of such practical difficulties, David prays God to "keep him in a perfect way,—to direct his steps,—to hold him up,—to preserve him from presumptuous sins;—order my steps in thy word."

If in the scriptures are some doctrines hard to be understood, are there not commands hard to be obeyed? Thousands lead wicked lives, who have an orthodox faith. In some instances, the obedient man must renounce his favourite pleasure, crucify his strongest passion, abandon the dearest object of his heart. Will not the good man, then, pray for grace, to do the will of God?

IV. From the subject, I infer that those do not behold the wondrous things of the law, who, passing by its precise meaning, adopt only such opinions, as appear to them to be just and reasonable.

Some persons admit the divine authority of revelation, yet adopt only such articles of faith, as seem to them most suitable. Instead of searching the scriptures, to learn their precise meaning, they form a creed themselves; perhaps borrowing some insulated passages to give it authority. Such do not behold wondrous things in the law of the Lord; they are delighted with their own inventions. Had they never heard of revelation, they might have formed a creed, as much to their satisfaction, the pagans may now do this. If we believe only what appears plain, and desirable, and just, we disarm revelation of all authority, our faith is on the sand, to be swept away by every wind, to be whirled about by every breath of air. What was orthodox, becomes erroneous, when we have changed our place and society. What was rational in youth, may seem absurd in mature life; what we believed in prosperity, is rejected in adversity. We may have as many creeds, as changes in our lives. On this principle, every individual may be

expected to have a faith different from his neighbour, according to his different education, pursuit, and tone of mind. Hence every sect has a different system. Instead of copying the law of the Lord, they adopt what seems to them, with their peculiar habits, to be reasonable and just. Hence, the poor and ignorant have their creed; the rich and the great their creed; the learned theirs, producing moral confusion and ruin. Do those merit the name of christian, merely because they acknowledge the authority of revelation, and have adopted a religious faith of their own?

If, in a fleet of a hundred ships, each commander, instead of being directed by his compass, follow his own opinion, when neither sun nor stars appear, what will be the result? Would not their destruction be as various as their opinions, or the fatalities of a stormy sea? So in the voyage of life, men neglect the compass of truth, and, in devious courses, follow the pictures of their own fancy. Can they reach the same coast, hail the spires of the same temple, land in the New Jerusalem?

Why should we pray for divine assistance, if we may understand the word with different meanings? If Socinus, and Calvin, and Swedenbourg, acknowledge the inspiration of the scriptures, will this render all their jarring opinions sound, christian doctrines? Truth is fixed, as the needle to the pole. One man may have acuteness of vision to see the pointing and vibrations of the needle more than another; one may understand doctrines more clearly, more exactly, than another; but as the keenest vision cannot see the needle point to the west, when it is really to the

north, so the profound genius cannot discover one class of doctrines, when an opposite class is actually revealed. You may as well imagine that you see a slumbering lake, where a lofty mountain rises to the clouds, or that you behold a stormy sea of angry billows, where is solid land, hills and dales, glittering spires, and cheerful villages. Men lose the excellence of truth; they see not the wonders of the divine law, if they forget its high authority, and frame their own creed, delighted with their own opinions, and satisfied with the inventions of their own wisdom.

V. If it be our duty to pray for wisdom, that we may understand the word of God, then we ought to use other means.

Not only prayer, but meditation and reading, comparing one passage with another, are serious duties. In this connexion, I should be criminal, not to mention scripture commentaries. Men of learning, who were men of God, have devoted their lives to the study of the scriptures. They have left us the fruit of their labours. The writings of Poole, and Henry, and Burkit, of Doddridge, and Clark, and Scott, to name no more, deserve the gratitude of the christian world.

Still more useful, more necessary, is the preached gospel. This is the grand luminary, which guides men through the dark and dangerous wilderness of this world, to the heavenly Canaan. This is the glorious pillar of fire, to lead them through the sea of worldly troubles, and the cold Jordan of death, to mount Zion, and the city of the living God. Faith cometh by hearing the gospel. Those, who irreligiously neglect to attend on a preached gospel, in a

teachable, and humble manner, from sabbath to sabbath, manifest a daring contempt of divine mercy, practically bid defiance to almighty wrath, and render their destruction nearly certain. Those, who are destitute of the gospel, and neglect any reasonable sacrifice to ensure the invaluable blessing, treat themselves as unworthy of eternal life. They prove that they love darkness rather than light, falsehood rather than truth, that the love of God is not in their hearts, nor the fear of God before their eyes. They seek the ways of death. They reject the grace of God, to their own destruction. They build the walls of their own prison, whence they will not be released, till they have paid the uttermost farthing.

SERMON XVII.

JAMES v, 17, 18.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

MAN is the most useful study of man. To ascertain his moral character, his capacity for obedience, the limits of his power, or extent of his attainments, is a duty of high importance. As in the glass, face answers to face, so, in some measure, do the minds of men correspond to each other. Particularly is this the case with those in the same degree of improvement, whether saint, savage, or sage. By analyzing the conduct and motives of other men, you may learn more of your own. By observing what they accomplish, you may discover your own powers, the latent resources of your own minds. No study, no science, is more interesting. Should a wise man land on a

newly discovered island, he might, perhaps, readily remark some peculiarities in the soil, the animals, the plants and minerals; but before he fully investigated them, unless his profession directed him to a particular pursuit, he would examine the character of the inhabitants. Their descent, their language, their customs, their laws, their government, their religion, and the state of the arts, would be objects of his diligent inquiry. What is the colour of a flower, compared with the morals of an accountable being? What is the texture of a shell, or the height of a mountain, compared with the attainments of immortal man?

Of all men, Elias, or Elijah, is one of the most remarkable. He rises eminent among the sons of Adam, and well deserves particular attention. Of other prophets, something is said respecting their parentage or early life; but this man is abruptly introduced; he seems to drop from the clouds, a prophet in mature life, with the message of God on his lips. Hence the Jews and some christian commentators have supposed him an angel. This, the text seems to contradict, asserting that he had our passions; was a *man* like us.

Will you accompany me, the moments before us, in contemplating his character?

I. He was a man of remarkable *faith*. He believed in God. In what God revealed, he put unlimited confidence. He said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years; but according to my word." Here was unmixed, unwavering faith. Had he not enjoyed the

"faith, which is a demonstration of things not seen," his self-respect, his vanity, would have preserved him from such a daring declaration. Had one doubt chilled his heart, he would not have presumed to express himself in such unqualified terms. The next evening dew might have detected his rashness, and rendered him the sport of the king and country. But believing in God, he is not afraid to proclaim what God has revealed. Afterwards, God commanded him to retire to one of the branches of the Jordan, assuring him that the ravens should supply his wants. What could be more improbable, or a more severe trial of his faith? What could be more dismal, than to dwell in this solitary spot, ravenous birds his companions and stewards? Feeding on carrion themselves, whence could they procure wholesome food? From whose table or oven could they obtain bread?

Here, I should not do justice to you or myself, did I not remark, that some difference of opinion has prevailed on this subject. The word *orebim*, translated ravens, is by some of the learned thought to signify *merchants*. They suppose that travelling traders, constantly passing by the retreat of Elijah, sold him provision. Others suppose the word signifies Arabians, and that these wandering people supplied the prophet's table. The Jewish Rabbis say, that a town in the vicinity was called *Orbo*, which is nearly the same word, rendered ravens; and St. Jerome says the inhabitants of this place supplied Elijah with bread and meat. Jerome had lived in that country, and taken great pains

to ascertain facts, to prepare himself to translate the scriptures. His opinion has great weight with the learned. His brook becoming dry, God sends Elijah to Zarephath, a town of Zidon, beyond the limits of Israel, a pagan neighbourhood, whence Jezebel brought her idolatry. He was not sent to Obadiah, who was then supporting a hundred prophets of the Lord; he was not sent to the rich men of Zidon; but to a widow, a poor widow, who had been commanded to support him. What means had she, in the famine, to support such a boarder? As he came to the gate of the city, he found her gathering sticks, and he said to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water, and a morsel of bread." She said, "As the Lord God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal, and a little oil, and I am gathering two sticks, that I may dress it for me, and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Here the prophet's faith breaks forth. "Fear not; first make me a little cake;—the barrel of meal shall not waste—nor the cruise of oil fail." Had not his faith been triumphant, he would have trembled, making such a declaration, lest the provision failing, his name would be blazoned abroad, as a false, fraudulent deceiver. But witness the power of faith; it renders her barrel a store-house of flour; her cruise a fountain of oil.

Does not this lovely Zidonian rival the daughters of Israel in the strength of her faith? Might she not have been the ancestor of her, who, in the same region, a thousand years after, brought her daughter to Jesus Christ? In the midst of a famine, a poor widow, with a dependant child, makes bread and

supplies a stranger from her miserable pittance. She believes God, and casts herself on his bounty.

Another more wonderful display of the prophet's faith is seen, when different military commanders are sent to arrest him. "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and destroy thee, and thy fifty." Fire did come and destroy him and his fifty. But for his faith, he might have been branded with infamy, as a boasting son of malice and murder. The whole life of this remarkable man was a display of faith. His very attempt to raise the child of the widow, his venturing into the presence of Ahab, who had searched the world for him, his contest with the prophets of Baal, and, above all, his stepping into the chariot of fire, and calmly ascending from the world, were triumphant exhibitions of faith in God.

By faith Noah, warned of God, and moved with fear, built an ark, and saved himself and family. This was natural, and not to be compared with the exploits of Elijah. By faith Abram went out, not knowing whither he went; but this was an ordinary enterprize, compared with the wonders of the prophet's faith. Abram went among strangers, visited Palestine, before the wild Arabs of his house had made it so dangerous a country as it now is. Elijah, voluntarily, ventures to ride in the whirlwind, to traverse the starry skies, to visit worlds unseen, unknown.

II. A remarkable influence over the minds of others, a wonderful talent of persuasion, was a distinguished trait of Elijah's character.

A stranger, a traveller, he asks charity at the door of a widow in the village of Zarephath. With relig-

ious emphasis, she tells him, that she has only a handful of meal, and a little oil. Will she shorten her own life, and the life of her little son, to gratify a passing beggar? Ought not her charity to begin at home? Who can be in greater need? Say not, this was the providence of God, and therefore reflected no honour on the prophet's talents. This was no more the providence of God, than it always is when pious women are persuaded to perform their duty. She must have been convinced, and persuaded, or she would never have given him a single crumb, from her morsel of bread. No ordinary means could have accomplished this. Doubtless he urged not merely his own necessities, but the command and promise of God. He spoke with that air of sincerity, earnestness, and irresistible power, which convinces the judgment, and satisfies the heart. The things asserted were too remarkable, too improbable, to gain belief, uttered by an ordinary man or in an ordinary manner. This would never wring the last morsel of bread from a perishing family, a helpless widow and orphan.

His influence over the mind of Obadiah was not less remarkable. "Go tell Ahab that Elijah is here." Obadiah knew the wrath of the king, but did not believe he would be suffered to destroy the prophet. He supposed God would again convey him to some place of safety, and that the king would sacrifice *him*, for not making Elijah his prisoner. He, therefore, pleads for his own life, arguing his cause most affectingly. He reminds the prophet that he had himself supported a hundred prophets. It was hard now to

be made a sacrifice. Still he takes his life in his hand, and informs Ahab where Elijah is, expecting his own immediate destruction to follow.

Was not here a triumph of intellect, of mind over mind? If you doubt, make the experiment. Go, and persuade your friend, to undertake some service, which he believes will be fatal to his life. A few such master spirits, who persuade others to second their measures, to be the instruments of their purposes, guide the community, and govern the world. This mental power triumphs, more strikingly, over Ahab himself. For a moment recollect their relative situation. Ahab was an absolute despot, checked by no parliament or council. Enraged with Elijah, he had searched for him in all the neighbouring states. Elijah had fled, yet, by Obadiah, now proposes an interview. Ahab is instantly on his march, traversing hill and dale, like a blood hound, hastening to his prey. Soon his roving eye catches the object of his revenge. In fancy, he sees him hung in air, to feed the ravens. He cries, "Art thou he who troublest Israel?" But the prophet's voice I hear. Is it supplication, or terrour, or despair? "I have not troubled Israel—but thou, and thy father's house;—gather all Israel to mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty. He said no more. He humbled, he subdued the impious Ahab, who sent to all the children of Israel, to assemble at mount Carmel Who ever witnessed such a change in a haughty despot, covered with crimes, and thirsting for blood? The voice of the prophet operates like the electric flash. His eye sparkling with holy zeal: his brow

marked with the decision of the heart, his words, more powerful than those, which commanded the sun to stand still, have tamed the madness of the king. The lion, roaring for his prey, has become harmless as a lamb; a little child may lead him.

Excepting in one instance, we have not heard Elijah address a public assembly; then his power of persuasion surpassed all example. Nothing equals this in the history of eloquence. In imagination pass to the land of Canaan; lift your eye to the hill of Carmel, covered with the thousands, and the ten thousand times ten thousand of Israel, an impious race of hardened idolaters. Behold the prophet of God rising in the midst of this boundless multitude. His person is uncouth; he seems more like a hermit, than a powerful orator; he is a hairy man, and has a leathern girdle round his loins. Surveying the immense throng, his eyes affect his heart. He exclaims, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him." His words are armed with power; they produce conviction; the people are silent; they answer him not a word; the doctrine appeared reasonable.

Having made such progress, he pursues his advantage, and proposes an experiment to settle the dispute. "The God who answers by fire, let him be God." 'If Baal answers by fire, I will join you in his worship. If Jehovah answers by fire, then you will unite with me, and worship Him.' Never did orator succeed better. The people, all the people, answered and said, "It is well spoken." Their confidence is gained. With anxiety they now wait the trial by

fire. The prophets of Baal proceed to the experiment, and utterly fail. Elijah then erects an altar, calls upon God, and he answers by fire. The people are satisfied; they are overcome with the force of truth; they fall on their faces, and cry, "The Lord he is God; Jehovah, he is the God;" they abandon idolatry. Was not this the triumph of human eloquence? What was the trembling of Cæsar, addressed by Cicero, in behalf of Ligarius? What were the shouts of the Athenian rabble, when Demosthenes spoke? How feeble and trivial was the speech of St. Paul before the Areopagus, compared with this overwhelming address of Elijah to the tribes of Israel? Those orators influenced an individual, or a few persons, or a common assembly at most; but the millions of Israel are swayed by the voice of Elijah, as a field of wheat bows before the gale, or a forest before the wide spreading conflagration.

III. Elijah was singular for a vein of bold humour and sarcasm.

This may be a useful gift, under the direction of prudence. From this bow, a wise man may shoot deadly arrows. Few are sharper than those of Elijah. After the prophets of Baal had prayed, and cried, and cut and mangled themselves a long time, and had become weary, and mortified, and desperate, Elijah vexed them still more. He mocked them, crying as they cried, "Oh Baal, hear us." Then sarcastically tells them to cry louder. Verily your god is a god; he could hear you, if he were not so busy or careless. Perhaps he is talking with his foolish companions. The noise of his company drowns your feeble voices:

cry louder, louder still, if you would be heard. He may be on a journey; the prancing of his horses, or the rattling of his wheels, prevents his hearing. He may be asleep. Rouse him up. He is a dull and drowsy god, and requires noisy worshippers."

All this may seem to us, not only extravagant, but unnatural; but it perfectly agrees with the notions, which the pagans entertained of their gods.

IV. Our prophet was somewhat variable in his temper, and subject to melancholy depressions of spirit.

It seems to surpass the strength which is given to man, to maintain a constant tone of excitement. The strongest minds, possessing the most refined sensibility, and most elastic powers, are peculiarly liable to depression, melancholy, and sadness. Some writers, therefore, have considered melancholy as an attendant of genius. However this may be, I need not prove, that minds of the highest order, especially after remarkable exertions, are frequently crushed with distressing melancholy; the most trivial inconvenience is magnified to an alarming danger. If a friend treat him with neglect, he imagines the world are leagued against him. A slight indisposition is, in his view, a dangerous malady. Ingratitude, or impiety, in the circle around him, convinces his mind that the whole world is deluged in wickedness.

Elijah had just manifested the most astonishing force of character; he had assumed the direction of the king; he had superseded the royal authority, and ordered four hundred and fifty prophets to execution. At the close of this wonderful scene, he learns that

Jezebel was angry, and threatened him with a woman's revenge. A sudden panic strikes his spirit; his resolution is gone; his heart dies within him; he flies for his life, to Beersheba, in the kingdom of Judah. Here he was perfectly safe, beyond the jurisdiction of Ahab, and under the protection of the pious king Jehoshaphat. Indeed, it is not probable that any danger was near him. All Israel had just raised their voices in his favour. Would the queen have dared to touch a hair of his head? She was afraid of Elijah, and wished to frighten him from the great work of reformation, which he had so triumphantly commenced. Therefore, she sends him word, that she would slay him. Her plot succeeded. The melancholy prophet fled from Beersheba alone, a day's journey into the howling wilderness. His terrours seem to have deprived him of his reason. He sits down under a juniper tree, and prays that he may die. Men are seldom in the best state of mind, when they are forward to die. From the wilderness, he travels a hundred and fifty miles, to mount Nebo. This occupied him forty days, going through by-ways, and hiding himself in secret corners; his progress was less than four miles a day. Is this my lord Elijah, who just now swayed the hearts of Israel with the breath of his divine eloquence? Lord, what is man!

V. Elijah was remarkably ardent and successful in his devotions.

The instances of his successful prayer deserve our particular recollection. God is no respecter of persons. In the answers of his prayers, we have not only a proof of divine faithfulness, but a

pattern and example for ourselves. The grace of supplication, exercised by one good man, may be exercised by another, and by all. We may be as devout as Elijah. God giveth liberally to all who ask him in a certain manner. We are straitened and limited not in God, but by our own cold and contracted desires. The scene is inexpressibly distressing, when the child of the prophet's hostess falls sick, and dies; famine abroad, and disease and death at home. The afflictions of her neighbours do not permit them to visit, and comfort her, as they would wish. Personal distress often hardens the heart, and increases its selfishness. The person is too much absorbed in his own distress, to feel strong sympathy for others. He is more disposed to expect sympathy and consolation, than to yield comfort or relief. He is often too much occupied in relieving himself, to afford assistance to others. The neighbourhood of this widow were borne down with their own miseries; her cup of suffering runs over. The husband of her youth is gone; her darling boy is gone; and, somehow, she conceives, by the influence or agency of Elijah. She had saved his life; and he has slain her son. Her disturbed passions burst forth in the language of distress and crimination. "What have I to do with thee, thou man of God. Art thou come to slay my son? Was this thy design, so to punish my sins?"

Elijah perceived the deadly jealousy of her heart; such an opinion might destroy his reputation; he might become infamous, as the cause of this calamity. The honour of Jehovah was concerned; his prophets

might become odious, as the ministers of wrath. He resolves to plead this cause before his God. He says to the woman, "Give me thy child." The child is dead; nothing worse can happen; she complies. He retires to his chamber, his heart labouring with the most intense desires, the most impassioned supplications. He pours out his soul as water, before his God. He presses his petitions; he multiplies and repeats them; he perseveres.

God heard and answered, as he always hears such supplications. With raptures of joy, the mother receives her child restored to life. Other remarkable instances of his successful prayer, you all recollect. Standing by the altar of sacrifice, he raises his voice to heaven; fire falls and consumes the offering, the wood, and the altar itself. At the sound of his prayer, the clouds retire, the brooks and springs are dry, the plants wither and perish.

While the land is thus scorched, he ascends mount Carmel; looking around, not a speck of a cloud is visible. He puts himself in the posture of prayer. He resolves to pray till the clouds rise; till the rain falls. He sends his servant to look westward, whence he expected the shower. He returns once and again, having discovered nothing. Again and again, he sends him, resolving to continue his devotions, till the rain comes. The cloud rises, the heavens are dark, the floods are poured on the fields of Israel. Who can justly estimate the privilege of prayer, limit its efficacy, or duly commend the excellent character of the prophet?

REFLECTIONS.

1. In the history of Elijah, you obtain a glance at one principle of the divine government. The providence and council of God rest on the faith and prayer of his people. Whether God govern in an arbitrary manner, or by physical laws, or in some other mode, men have long disputed. In this biographic sketch of the prophet, you discover the guiding star of providence, the channel in which events are directed, the *golden pivot* on which turn the mighty interests of the world.

The prayers of Elijah had respect to eminent individuals, to the nation of Israel, and the church of God. They involved events of the highest importance, to kings and people, to church and state. These events were measured, directed, and controlled by his prayers. As the river bears along the cheerful bark; as the gale moves the mighty billows of the deep, so the holy prayers of God's people produce and control the events of his providence. He gives a spirit of prayer; he kindles intense, devotional ardour in the soul, then seconds and consummates those desires, in the events of his providence.

Prayer is the offspring of that mind, which directs all events. It is impossible, that prayer should not influence God, because it is excited by his Spirit. Prayer moves the hand, which moves the world. touches the spring, which directs the machinery of the universe.

While clouds and darkness are round about him, while his footsteps are in deep waters; while he does not allow us to enter his council chamber, nor to know the secret mysteries of his kingdom; he does indulge us with the wonders of revelation, to enter the darkness round his throne, to wade in the waters of the sanctuary, to the ankles and to the loins, to listen at the door of his council house. The secret of the Lord is with those, who fear him; and this is one, most wonderful, that the prayers of his people "command" his measures, control his government, are the instruments of his purposes, the medium of his agency, the organs of his power, in this province of his boundless empire.

II. From the story of this good man's life, you may learn the important lesson, that the path of duty is the path of safety.

A more striking proof of this important doctrine is not easily found. To a selfish, calculating mind, he seems to be a rash man, perpetually rushing into danger; yet, if you observe, you always find him safe and unhurt. The wrath of enemies, the threats of power, famine and sword, do not injure him. His fidelity takes away their terrour, despoils them of their power. He boldly tells Ahab that no rain shall fall for years, but when he pleases. To king Ahaziah, who was sick, he says, "Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up; but shalt surely *die*." When duty calls him, to teach them their folly and their sins, kings and prophets are no more in his view than worms and insects. At his word they die upon their beds, or their blood reddens the waters of Kishon.

While his whole life seems to be a succession of fearless darings, not a hair of his head is hurt.

His life is a volume of practical proof, that the path of duty is the path of safety. Who can read or hear his story, and not resolve to go where duty calls, to do what duty requires, leaving the consequences with God. God is now as much disposed to save his friends from evil, as when he bid the ravens feed Elijah, or shut the mouths of lions, while Daniel was a lodger in their dwelling. Nothing can harm you, while you are followers of that which is good. You may, like Elijah, think it prudent to retreat into the wilderness; like Joseph, you may be charged with crimes; like Jacob, you may quit your father's house, and be cheated by your best friends; but these shall prove to be the occasion of success, of peace, and hope, and gladness. Go then, my dear friends, pursue the path of duty, diligently, faithfully, and God will pour you out a blessing. He will crown your days with his goodness and tender mercy.

III. From this subject we discover, that the best men have some imperfections and sins.

No doubt Elijah was one of the best men, who ever lived. He was eminent in faith, and prayer, and every virtue. His courage had a firmness and moral strength, which bid defiance to danger. He did more than to chase a thousand, and put ten thousand to flight. Rising in his intellectual and moral greatness, the nation, with its kings and prophets, submit to his orders; yet *some spots* of the first Adam appear. So unequal was his temper, that when a woman threatened him, he fled to the desert. Having reached the

summit of mount Nebo, his peevishness and petulance are worse than childish. He wishes to die, for fear of dying, or of being killed. He who denounced death to kings, who changed the clouds to brass, and covered the land with famine and desolation, who snatched a victim from death, and disappointed the grave; who brought rain and fire from heaven, like a frighted child, now cries, "A lion is at the door; I shall be slain in the street."

Observe, also, how uncharitable and censorious he is. "What dost thou here Elijah," is the voice of God. "Is this a place for a prophet? What is thy work, on this desolate mountain? Where are thy people, the flock of God?" Hear his miserable answer. "The people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets, and I only, I *alone* am left." "Not one man in the nation has faith or true religion; all have denied the essential doctrines of revelation, but myself." Such are the opinions of Christians, when they view their brethren with an evil eye, when they make the Shibboleth of a party, the essence of piety. Instead of approving this temper and conduct, God commands him to leave this hiding place, and return to his important duties, assuring him that instead of his being the *only* faithful man, there were *seven thousand*, *sound* in the faith. Instead of these railing accusations, he ought to have given thanks, that all Israel had recently, in a most wonderful manner, professed their faith in Jehovah. Let us learn from the gospel of Christ, to esteem others *better* than ourselves.

IV. We learn from the subject that God rewards eminent goodness with eminent blessings. What a man sows, that will he reap. No axiom in science is more true. He receives his own measure, pressed down and running over. With the merciful, God shows himself merciful. He abases the proud; he exalts the humble. Elijah boldly proclaims approaching judgments to wicked kings; God rewards his fidelity by abundant supply in the desert, by the mansion of hospitality, by the voice of kindness. He prays devoutly, sincerely, perseveringly; the clouds dissolve in rain; the votaries of Baal are confounded; the gates of death are unbarred. He is eminent in the graces of the saint, his reward is undescribable; in this mortal state, he is prepared for celestial glory, without passing through the dark, dismal, dreadful regions of the dead; without the terrour, the distress, the anguish, and horrour, of severing soul and body. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, his mortal puts on immortality, is incorruptible and glorious, like the Son of God. Without waiting like others, till the day of judgment, to be openly acknowledged, and acquitted, and rewarded, he is, soul and body, immediately admitted to heaven, to the vision of God and the lamb. He enjoys now, what other saints will, after the day of judgment. He is honoured as no other man, except Enoch, ever was. Instead of the pains, and fears, and distress, and agonies, of sickness and death, as the last hour approaches, he travels in his strength from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, whose waters, awed

by his presence, stop in their course, and he passes the channel on dry ground. While he and Elisha are in religious converse, they are parted, not by the sudden effects of a fatal disorder, not by the pangs of dissolving nature, not by the last struggle of mortal strength, not by the silence, the pallid visage, and the dreadful attendants of death ; but by a burst of heavenly splendour ; a chariot of light and flame, a band of angels, separate these friends of God ; and Elijah is borne to the New Jerusalem, to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. He sits down with Abram, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, with all the spirits of just men made perfect, with all the angels of light, in the kingdom of glory. There he now rejoices with the elect, blessing and adoring God, that he was enabled to deny himself, to stand fast in the faith, to be valiant for God, to be faithful in his calling. No harp is louder, no song is more joyful among the children of Adam. They yet suffer from the effects of sin ; their bliss is not complete, their state is unnatural ; their bodies are in their graves, food for worms, or the sport of all the winds of heaven. They are waiting, and waiting for the resurrection of their bodies, clothed in immortal splendour, when they will receive the full reward of their labours, and like the angels, be free from every mark of human apostacy. Such the prophet Elijah already is. Accordingly Dr. Watts says, "When Enoch and Elijah carried their bodies with them to heaven, it was certainly a sublime honour, and a peculiar privilege, which they enjoyed, to have so early a happiness both in flesh and spirit conferred on them, so many ages before the rest of mankind.

For though the soul can act without the body; yet as the body is a part of the compounded nature of man, our happiness is not designed to be complete, till the soul and body are united in a state of perfection and glory. This happiness was conferred early on those two favourites of heaven."*

God gives to eminent zeal and fidelity, a reward as eminent. God rendered the blessings of Elijah as remarkable as his virtues. Blest prophet, I see him rise from the plain of Jordan, escaping the king of terrours, and the dark valley. I hear him exclaim, "Oh death where is thy sting, where are thy terrours; Oh grave I shall never enter thy dark mansion."

Blest man, I follow thy course, as far as the eye can see, or the fancy soar. Thou hast entered the heavenly gate; thy reward is immediate glory. We, also, shall put on immortality, when the Judge shall appear, when the trump shall sound, and the dead rise. *Amen.*

* World to come, p. 63.

SERMON XVIII.

ECCLESIASTES vi, 12.

For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?

A RASH boldness of opinion is frequently the ruin of man. Unreasonable confidence that we do 'know what is good for man in this life,' destroys its thousands, its multitudes, which no man can number. A presumption that we know what things would make us happy, and a violent pursuit of those things, often destroy the peace, the innocence, the hope of man. So conclusive are the evidences of these facts, that most men of observation acknowledge they have but little foresight, but feeble assurance, of what is best for them. They lament the errours of human judgment, and the scantiness of human knowledge; they confess that they grope in darkness, and wander in paths of delusion; yet if we notice their conduct, we may suspect their sincerity, or believe that their hearts protest against the assent of their understandings.

Those, who may think the confidence of others delusive and improper, generally show, by the ardour of their desires, and the activity of their pursuits, that they have very little concern for their own sagacity. Their unwavering hope, and their inconsolable grief of disappointment, show their sanguine confidence in their own schemes. The testimony of the wise, and the precepts of revelation, teach caution in practice, and moderation of desire ; yet they presume an exception may be made in their case ; therefore, as deaf men, they hear not ; as blind men, they see not. They as rashly seize the rose of delight, as if no thorn gave life to the flower ; they as boldly riot on the honey of voluptuousness, as if no poisonous things clustered round; they as wantonly regale themselves under the tree of forbidden pleasure, as if death were not in the indulgence. Ambition will suppose that happiness is to be found in the honours of society, the applause of the world. Avarice will suppose that riches can produce contentment. Sensuality seeks only the pleasures of sense. The text teaches us that all these are the calculations of folly ; in a strong manner, it asserts that no one can tell what is good for him in this world.

Doctrine. No one knows what circumstances are best for him in this life.

1. No man knows what is best for him in this life, because he does not know the moral influence of any event on his heart or life.

This world is a vapour, a shadow ; immortality is the invaluable property of man. As is the moral influence of any event, such is its benefit or injury.

Though the event be painful, yet if its moral influence be salutary; if it produce humility, a heavenly temper, and aspirations for holiness, it is profitable, it is good.

If the indulgence of desire, if transports of pleasure, harden our hearts or sear our consciences, these pleasures are the judgments of God, the greatest evils of life. We cannot anticipate with certainty, the moral effects of different events on ourselves; therefore, we cannot tell what is best for us. Afflictions may bring our sins to remembrance, break our hearts with contrition, awaken our ardent prayers, and new obedience. Afflictions may vex our spirits, excite our complaints, and multiply our murmurs. Afflictions hardened Pharaoh, confirmed his impiety, kindled the blaze of his furious resentment. Afflictions humbled David in the dust, filled his heart with every grace, elevated him above the common standard of human goodness.

Prosperity may enlarge benevolence, put the law of kindness in our lips, and warm our hearts with gratitude. Prosperity may inflame our pride, rouse our anger and revenge, banish from our practice the appearance of piety and goodness. The success of Hazael unloosed all the abominations of his heart. The young men of the nation he slew; the babes he dashed in pieces, and slaughtered their mothers. David and Solomon committed their worst crimes in the days of their prosperity.

Art thou, oh man, more determined than was Hazael? Art thou, more holy than David, or wiser than Solomon? Were thy desires gratified, thy passions indulged, art thou sure the moral influence

would be happy on thy heart and life? While any uncertainty remains on this point, no person can tell what circumstances are best for him in this life.

II. No person can tell what is best for him in this life, because he cannot foresee what natural evils may be connected with prosperous circumstances.

Our best comforts are mixed with evil. Our prosperity excites envy, incomparably more malignant, than the indifference or contempt endured in low circumstances. The moment our heads are seen rising above our fellows, the air is darkened with a cloud of arrows; our sensibility, and perhaps our reputation, bleeds with a thousand wounds. If we become richer than our neighbours; if we have more honour or success; they pretend that, not our merit, but our cunning, or our dishonesty, or our powerful friends, have given us this elevation. Prosperity produces more flatterers than friends, often prevents the social endearments of real kindness, and the delights of mutual confidence. Nor is this all; we ourselves often employ our success as the means of our injury and ruin. Prosperity is generally followed by luxury; luxury produces idleness; this produces disease and death. Every year, myriads are hurried to the grave, by the indulgence of their desires. That night in which Belshazzer was slain, had passed in riot, wine, and song. David was not so safe on the throne of Israel, as in the pastures of Bethlehem. Here he enjoyed his lambs and his harp, and bid defiance to the roaring inhabitants of the woods. But when a king, his throne was too alluring, his crown too splendid for his own safety. A rebellion of his own son drives

him from his palace and his capital. Never did he endure such anguish, while attending his father's flocks. Had not Saul been anointed with oil, and raised to royal dignity, he might not have fallen on mount Gilboa. Had not the monarchs of Mexico and Peru* possessed countries of silver and gold, their descendants possibly might till this day have inherited the crowns of their ancestors. But allured by the splendour of their wealth, fierce invaders cross the Atlantic, arrest those sovereigns in their palaces, rob them of empire and of life, slaughter their people, and blot their names from the catalogue of nations. The fair page of historic truth has recorded, for the instruction of future ages, that nobles, princes, and monarchs, have bled under the hands of savage executioners, not for their crimes, but because of their elevation in society, the weight of their influence, and the glory of their names. Who then knoweth what is best for him in this life?

III. No person knows what is best for him in this life, for he knows not what good may result from afflicting circumstances.

Perhaps we may all remember disappointments and troubles, which terminated in our advantage. Individuals and nations have experienced the greatest benefits from their most dreadful sufferings. The apostasy of Judas, and the blood of the cross, were the salvation of the world. The lawless depravity of Henry VIII. was overruled to introduce the reformation into the British empire. By appropriating their estate to the building of the ark, Noah and his family receive a

* Montezuma and Atahualpa.

world as their reward. Had not Abraham made a great sacrifice, and given up to Lot the plain of Jordan, fertile as the garden of the Lord, he might have continued with him, and like him have lost his house and property in the fires of Sodom. Happy for Moses was the bloody decree of Pharaoh for destroying all the male children of the Hebrews. The river resigns her victim, and death is disappointed of his prey. Moses is carried to the palace, and to the seminaries of science; he becomes learned in all the wisdom of Egypt; he is prepared to be the legislator of Israel, and the instructor of nations. Though sad the day to his native country, Daniel experienced great benefit from being a captive in Babylon. No longer confined to the science or offices of the petty tribes in Palestine, he receives a liberal education in Babylon, is taught "all the learning of the Chaldeans;" viceroy of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, his influence is felt through the empire extending "to the end of the earth." Joseph, from being envied and hated by his brethren, from being cast into a pit, and sold as a slave, from being accused of a most infamous crime, and from being chained in a dungeon, experienced the most splendid elevation; he rose to honour, wealth and grandeur.

Had not Mordecai and Esther been themselves included in the sentence of death against the Jews, had they not felt the sword piercing their own souls, they had perhaps never been the saviours of their nation. Their prayers broke their oppressor's chains, shivered their weapons of destruction. They might sing of judgment. Driven from his father's house,

defrauded by his uncle, Jacob is compelled to depend on himself. His dangers call forth every resource of his mind, rouse every secret energy of the man, the cunning of his heart, and the strength of his hands. Prosperity, wealth and independence follow. Did he know, did he imagine, that those things were for his benefit? Does any man know what good may result from the most afflicting circumstances? Does he know what is best for him in this life?

IV. We know not the things, which are best for us in this life, for we cannot foresee what change will be made in our feelings and opinions.

In early life the ambitious man pants for riches. By diligence and economy he gains his object; his house is splendid, his lands are fertile, his servants are numerous, and his company cheerful; but he has lost his relish for gaiety and parade. He is unhappy. His former habits are necessary for his comfort, and he gladly returns to his former style of life. The man, fatigued with the cares and toils of business, longs for rest and retirement. In retirement he finds an insupportable gloom, a melancholy, dismal as the grave; he longs for the bustle and noise of business.

The child pants for the pleasures of youth. The youth is restless for the reputation of mature age, and the comforts of settled life. Settled in the world before he has adjusted his affairs to his mind, he becomes alarmed; he starts, and finds himself undone. Rolling years have silvered his locks; pains and diseases are creeping upon him; many of his dearest friends are in the grave; and his last sands are rapidly falling. He

looks back with regret, and envies the cheerfulness and hopes of life, enjoyed by those, who are young.

We frequently find a wilderness of thorns, where we expected a paradise of flowers. The object most captivating in the pursuit, when obtained, generally loses its brightest charms. The object is the same, but our feelings or opinions are changed. This is true of riches, and honours, and all the pleasures of life. Solomon made a more fair experiment than any of us can. Orchards and vineyards presented him their richest fruits. Servants and maidens waited his pleasure, and anticipated his wishes; silver and gold were as stones, in Jerusalem; gardens bloomed, and palaces rose at his command; the blood of the grape, the harp and song, cheered his spirits, love and beauty mingled enchantment with his delights. Did these things answer his expectations, or was he disappointed by the change in his opinions or feelings? He answers, "Then I looked on all the works of my hands; and all was vanity and vexation of spirit. I hated life, and all the labour I had taken." Who then, my friends, knoweth what is good for him in this life?

V. No man can tell what is best for him in this life, because he knows not the determinations of God respecting him.

No man knows what God has determined shall be the effect of any particular event, or of all. events, which concern him in this life; therefore no man is certain what circumstances, all things considered, are for his greatest good. Appearances often disappoint

us. If God intend our ruin, he may employ sensual pleasure, as a wily serpent, to charm, and then to sting us to death. If God intend our felicity, he may send adversity, as a painful medicine, to heal our spiritual maladies. Prosperity may destroy us, and adversity may save us. With a smiling sky, and a fair wind, a vessel may founder in the middle of the ocean. From external circumstances, we cannot infer what are the designs of God respecting us. Why has God placed us in our present situation? Was it in anger? Was it in tender mercy? What Haman supposed his glory, became his ruin. His influence with the king,—his invitations from the queen,—his treasures of wealth,—were so many events, designed by God to accomplish his destruction, so many swords to pierce his heart, so many steps of elevation, to raise him to the stars, that his fall might be like that of Lucifer, from heaven to hell.

In every thing, which God does, every providence, and every event, he has an established design. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning." In the beginning, before the earth was, God knew all his works, that ever he should perform. He had fixed every circumstance, which should take place, he did not imagine, he did not conjecture, what would take place; but he knew what would take place; the things were certain. God does nothing, therefore, without knowing all the consequences. He is never disappointed; every thing answers the purposes intended. "His word prospers in the things for which he sends it." Every situation and circumstance in life is a unit of an eternal series, is a part of an immense, unchangeable

plan. He worketh all things after the counsel, or decision, of his own will. The most terrible deed of guilt,—the deed, which made the sun cover his face with darkness, the rocks burst, the dead rise, was accomplished according to the determinate counsel of God;—the Redeemer of the world was led to the cross, precisely as it had been determined of God, before the foundation of the world.

On this principle of divine purposes the prophets foretold things to come. Not a single event could be foretold with certainty, unless all things were fixed by the purpose of God; for not a single event can be named, which is not dependent on ten thousand other events. It is absolutely impossible to enumerate all the circumstances, which must take place to produce any event;—that a single rose may bloom in your garden, or an ear of corn ripen in your field; that one of our sons may be as a golden pillar, or one of our daughters, as a polished stone, in the temple of our God.

Not to suppose God a being of immutable designs, is to suppose him less perfect than are prudent rational men. Does the carpenter cut down and collect timber for a house, without regard to its size and destination? Does he not determine the size of the building, and the length, and breadth, and quality of every piece of timber, and the exact number of the whole? Are not the posts and beams of a precise length, and species of wood? As far as he fails in any of these particulars, is he not imperfect in his art? Does not the owner of a ship, before he sends her abroad, determine what shall be her cargo, how many her hands,

and what the port of her destination? Will not God then, as exactly adjust the works of his hands, as precisely determine the effects of his arrangements, and as minutely fix the consequences of every situation in our lives? To us these determinations are as unknown, as the secrets of the grave, therefore we know not what things are best for us in this life. Sometimes God determines that events, most desirable in themselves, should ruin a man. Sometimes God determines that events, most distressing, should raise a man to felicity and glory. We cannot, merely from the event, ascertain what will be the effects. When God wraps himself in the terrours of darkness, the morning of joy may be rising. When the sun of prosperity shines with dazzling splendour, the abyss of destruction may open under our feet. When the wicked imagine that God is smiling, as a father, he may be ready to tear them, as the lion of Judah. It was the unalterable purpose of God to destroy Pharaoh. For this purpose he raised him up,* and placed him on a throne of honour, made him ruler of a fertile country, gave him a nation of slaves to gratify his ambition, and sent Moses and Aaron to deliver his message in a faithful manner.

This closes the scene; this hardens his heart; this completes his ruin. Were such effects, however, to be expected from such means? Did those, who saw

* Arminians to evade the force of this text have sometimes followed the Vulgate, and Aldas's Venice edition of the Septuagint, printed in 1518, which instead of saying as in our Bibles, "And in very deed for this cause *have I raised thee up*," &c. says thus, "And in very deed for this cause have *I kept thee alive*," &c. But we think it requires a microscopic eye to discern any real difference of sentiments in these different versions.

the rising glory of Egypt's king, imagine this was the course of destruction? Who then knoweth what is best for him?

The determination of God was, that David should be a valiant warriour, a great king, and a good man. To make him a warriour, God sends him not to a military academy, nor to the tented field, a pupil of some celebrated commander; but he is employed as a shepherd in the fields of Bethlehem; he cultivates his courage in slaying bears and lions. Then during a friendly visit to the camp, he meets the champion of Gath in single combat, and brings his head to his royal master, a trophy of his valour. The war songs of his tribe fan the sparks of his patriotism, and he burns with a hero's flame. He is envied by his prince, he is persecuted, he is hunted through the forests of Canaan, from hill to hill, from cavern to cavern. Here he learns patience, and caution, and fortitude, and courage, and all the stratagems of war, and is prepared for the throne of Israel. God had determined what should be the effect of every circumstance in these distressing events, but what mortal mind could anticipate those effects? So it is with us. God has an immutable design concerning us; every hair of our heads has its destination, and falls only to accomplish the plan of his providence. He has not made us without knowing how to dispose of us. Infinitely better, than the carpenter knows how to place each piece of timber in the building, does God know how to dispose of us. He knows the very points for which we are best adapted. Nor is he for a moment undetermined, whether to dispose of us in the best manner. This would suppose him

to be deficient in wisdom and goodness. Nothing can baffle his design. If our ruin be fixed, the desire of our hearts, the delight of our eyes, the balm of life, the gospel of grace, shall be a savour of death. If we be predestinated to eternal life, if our names be written in heaven, then our sighs and tears shall work for our good, shall add new raptures to our approaching bliss. But who can decipher these secret designs? Who can reveal the determination of God concerning each single event? Who then can tell what is good for him in this life?

REFLECTIONS.

I. We see the extreme folly of pursuing our happiness, by means unlawful or wicked.

Haman expected pleasure in his revenge; in his revenge he met his ruin. Such persons sacrifice the divine favour, which is a certain good, for earthly advantages, which are always uncertain in their influence. Esau bartered his birth-right, typical of spiritual privileges, for a momentary indulgence. Pleasure and wealth, when honestly acquired, are uncertain in their influence; how much more uncertain, if wickedly acquired. Cain expected felicity, when his brother was removed; he found himself a wretched vagabond. Sampson promised himself criminal pleasure with his fair Philistine; he paid the price with his liberty, his character, his eyes, and his life. Judas expected to enjoy the silver, which was the price of his friend, his Saviour, and his God. How fatal the disappointment. Hear his melancholy confession; see his

anguish and desperation; see him suspended by the mortal cord; see him falling headlong and dashed in pieces. Such is the fruit of seeking pleasure by unlawful means. If we knew what would certainly promote our felicity, some excuse might be made for the means adopted; but as we are entirely ignorant of what is best for us, it is stupidity and madness to employ criminal means to gain imaginary good.

II. If we do not know what is good for us in this world, let us be humble in our prosperity.

God has prospered your industry, and made you more wealthy than your neighbours; God has given you wisdom and prudence, and you enjoy more influence and respect, than many others. Then the words of many will be smoother than oil, while daggers are in their hearts. Is the mariner more safe on the mast, than his fellows below? Is a man more secure on the fiery summit of a volcano, than on the lowly plain? God lifts up some men by wealth and honour, and friends, to dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Which is destroyed by the whirlwind and the storm, the oak on the hills, or the willow of the vales?

God raised up Demas and Simon among the friends of Christ, to teach all professors of religion, by their fall, to take heed, lest they fall. God elevated Judas among the apostles, to warn all against trusting in their privileges. Nabal was ruined by his riches, and Hazael by his high station in society. While we are prosperous, let us remember we know not the things best for us, and be humble in our daily walk.

III. We are taught by the subject to be patient and submissive in our troubles.

We are unqualified to devise for ourselves; therefore should we say, "The will of the Lord be done." Nothing could render our destruction more certain, than the indulgence of all our wishes. It is wrong, it is presuming, it is daring, to murmur in our sorrows; we do not know but they are best for us. If we knew what would be best, and knew we were suffering things which were not best, our murmurs would seem more plausible; but as we are no judges of what is best, every complaint is rash impiety. It is impossible for us to ascertain which are best for us, the perils of Paul, or the luxuries of Solomon; the woes of Lazarus, or the sumptuous fare of Dives; it therefore becomes us to be patient under the troubles of life.

IV. The subject teaches us moderation in our desires. Is it not absurd to be zealous for objects, while it is uncertain, whether they will produce comfort or misery? When we know not whether death be in the cup, can we greedily swallow the draught? Was Ahab wise, in rushing so violently to battle? Was Rachel wise, in her importunity for children? Were Hamor and Shechem wise, in pressing for an alliance with Jacob? All these met death in the gratification of their desires. Thousands have found misery and death, in the objects they sought with violence. Not knowing what is best for us, we are taught moderation of desires. A pious and holy temper is necessary, to moderate the desires, and render the heart submissive, in view of such uncertainty

and dependence. Retaining his native pride and thirst for independence, man leans on his own wisdom, trusts to his own arm, and pants for pleasures not his own. Passionately he rushes to indulgence and ruin, exclaiming, "My will be done; my kingdom come." But gospel repentance breaks the heart, humbles the spirit, and moderates the desires.

V. We are taught by the subject that many of our troubles are foolish and wicked.

If we explore the dwellings of sorrow; if we inquire the cause of many sighs and tears, we shall learn they are the sighs and tears of anxious desire. Ahab was sick on his bed, sick with desire for the vineyard of Naboth. Absalom mournfully exclaims, "Oh that I were judge." Such worldly desires and anxieties constitute a large portion of human troubles. Such afflicting desires are unreasonable, because their indulgence might not produce any enjoyment. They are wicked, because they are not consistent with that humility and self-denial required in the gospel. The world therefore will be punished for a great part of their troubles, because they are wicked troubles.

VI. Let us learn from the subject, not to envy, or despise those, who appear more happy, or miserable, than we are.

Is any one of your acquaintance more an object of envy, than was the rich man to Lazarus, at his gate? He saw the lofty mansion and the purple robes; the cold crumbs informed him how sumptuous was the table. Although distressed with disease, the ground his couch, the clouds his curtains, and the dogs his companions, would his envy have been rational?

Where is the person, who would not prefer being Lazarus at the gate, to the rich man at the luxurious board?

Can a man appear more contemptible than Joseph did to Potiphar? He saw him a slave, a supposed criminal, confined in a dungeon, loaded with fetters of iron. Soon he sees him rise as a star of glory You do not know what is best for any person Whom then will you envy? You do not know what is best; whom then will you despise?

VII. If we know not what is good, let us rejoice that God reigns.

He knows what is best, and will do all things with wisdom. We slumber in idleness; we grope in darkness; we labour in vain; we call evil good, and good evil; we destroy ourselves. God can never mistake; he directs all beings; he governs all events; his providence is the safety of individuals, the safety of the world.

Ruth knew not which was the best field; God led her to the reapers of Boaz. Esther did not seek her elevated situation. God sent her to the capital, the palace, and throne of her king, "at such a time," as to save the nation of the Jews. The rain falls, the windows of heaven are opened; the fountains of the deep are broken up; the world is drowned. Noah has built a stupendous vessel; he and his family are shut in; not one remains on deck to guide her course. What is her probable fate? Driven by the fury of angry winds, in the midst of the storm, must she not be dashed in pieces among the hills? Or, as the greatest part of the earth is water, will she not prob-

ably be driven to the Mediterranean, or the Red Sea, the Indian, or Atlantic ocean, and never again reach land? The vessel floats, but traverses not the plains of Babylon, nor the level countries of the East; this would have almost doubled the duration and dangers of the voyage. She does not, as would seem unavoidable, drop down the vale of the Euphrates. She proceeds neither westerly nor southerly; this would have led her to the mighty waters, or to perish by famine, before she would find the channel of a harbour.

Though such fatalities appear inevitable, the providence of God prevents these fatalities. As if conscious of the divine will, as if animated with a spirit of wisdom, the lordly ark of Noah, bearing the church of God, without rudder, sail, or oar, without compass or pilot, lays her course, northwardly for the lofty mountains of Armenia; profound skill measures her progress, and as the water falls, he reaches the summit of Ararat. There, safely resting in her bed, she calmly contemplates the awful prospect; sees the wandering whirlwinds sport on the boundless deep, and on the mountain's side, hears the surrounding billows dash and roar. Let the earth rejoice; let the islands be glad; the Lord reigns.

VIII. As we are not judges of what is best, let us not be distressingly anxious for our friends, or country, or ourselves.

A proper regard and sympathy in their troubles, and congratulation on their prosperity, are indispensable duties; are demanded by the law of benevolence. But our subject teaches the folly and guilt of unavailing

and intemperate grief for the sorrows of friends, or ourselves. Nothing is more common than anxiety on account of parents, children, and friends. Your friends, it may be, are poor, or sick, or exposed to enemies. What then? Are you sure these circumstances are not the most safe and happy, that could possibly befal them? Are you sure the change, you so much desire, would not endanger their peace, their innocence, and their salvation? Are you sure the change would not ruin them in time and eternity? Why, then, will you not cheerfully leave them where they are? Why will you not gratefully leave them in the hands of God? He knows what is best. He is good. He placed them where they are. Art thou wiser, or better, than God?

For the same reason, we ought not to be anxious for ourselves. The world teems with sorrows; neither can we hope long to escape. Poverty, shame, sickness, and death, are lurking with envenomed arrows, to pierce our hearts, to murder our earthly felicity, to tear away our last hope. When the night of affliction arrives, let us accept the punishment of our sins, receive chastisement, as humble, teachable children. We know not what is good for us. David has told us, it was good for him to be afflicted. Thousands of others have said the same thing: it may be good for us. When that dread, dismal hour comes, which will come, which may soon come, when disease shall wither thy strength, baffle the skill of thy physician, and tear away the fond hopes of thy relatives, then be not appalled, be not terrified, be not alarmed. If ye have ever walked with God, he is still thy Father, and will not forsake

thee. Thou knowest not what is best for thee; God does. This event was intended by God, when you were nursed in thy mother's arms; when you were smiling in the lap of prosperity; when he visited you with his love and grace.

You have, through life, suffered afflictions with others; the bed of disease you find a scene of distress and anxiety. A thousand considerations torture thy heart, and perhaps rend thy bosom with agony. The disappointment of all thy hopes, the ruin of all thy plans, the anguish of thy friends, thy honoured parents, or lovely children, losing their last support, their silent tears, their heart-breaking sighs, swell the tide of thy miseries. What is infinitely more dreadful, the uncertainty of thy prospects, the weakness of thy hope, thy fears of divine wrath, thy awful apprehensions, respecting a dying moment, and a boundless eternity; the fire that for ever burns; these are considerations, which might shake a christian's peace of mind. Still cast thy burden on the Lord. He careth for thee. All these things may be for thy good. In a few moments your fears may vanish. God may be present. Eternity may burst on thy sight; angels may bear thee to the gate of glory, to the throne of the Redeemer. God may wipe the tears from thy eyes. You may walk the golden streets; you may hear the hosannas of angels, and be enraptured with the strains of celestial harmony, and join in the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Great and marvellous are thy works, O thou king of saints." Death is the gate of glory. Let us then cultivate that faith, by which we may sing, "When shall I

die, when shall I live for ever. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

IX. Let us from the subject learn the excellence of true religion.

As to worldly circumstances, no mortal can ascertain what is best. What is absolutely good or evil, he knows not by all that passes before him. We know not whether riches are a blessing, or poverty a curse; but we know that the blessed God is a sure guide, a safe protector, a good portion, a glorious friend. We know that his favour is present peace, and future blessedness. We know that true religion is a fair inheritance. In the field of wisdom, "the rose of sharon" blooms, and "the pearl of great price" is found; here waves the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," whose fruit is richer than were those of Paradise. "Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad. How goodly are thy tents, oh Jacob, and thy tabernacles, oh Israel. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion; God is in the midst of her; the God of Jacob is her refuge. Blessed is he, who blesseth thee; and cursed is he, who curseth thee."

We know the moral effect of religion on our characters. It will enlighten the mind, sanctify the desires, purify the taste, calm the passions, and rule the actions. Grace changes hatred to love, elevates the soul from the bondage of a slave to the dignity of a child; unites a worm of dust, with God, with angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect.

We know the design of God in giving grace to the soul. It is, by his goodness, his mercy, and compassion, to excite the admiration of the universe; it is to save the soul from guilt, remorse, and death; to save the soul, that in thy dying moments, thou mayest say, "Oh death, where is thy sting; oh grave, where is thy victory;" that in the day of judgment, amid falling stars, and burning worlds, thou mayest rejoice in transport, hearing thy Redeemer say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

True religion is an unceasing and eternal good. Wouldst thou no longer hazard the loss of thy soul; no longer tremble in the darkness of uncertainty, respecting thy salvation; no longer challenge eternal misery, tossed on the surges of passion and temptation; wouldst thou, resting on the rock of ages, enjoy the comforts of the Spirit, the assurance of hope, and the presence of thy God; wouldst thou, safe in the haven of rest, hear the tempest roar, and see the billows rise, while others sink, and are lost; then acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with him. While others reject the great Physician, dash the cup of salvation from his hand, and trample in the blood of the cross, receive ye the balm of life, and live for ever. Behold the Lamb of God; look to him, who bled on Calvary; look, and live for ever. He that believeth shall never die. All things shall work together for good, to them who love God.

SERMON XIX.

JOHN xvi, 8.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.

That man is a free agent, is a self-evident proposition, an intuitive truth. I am not more certain that I exist, than that I will, that I act, and that I choose, according to my pleasure. But while man is free, he is influenced by a divine power. While he chooses, and acts according to his choice, he is dependant on God for every thought. While he works out his own salvation himself, God works in him to will and to do. While exerting the most astonishing powers of mind, he is only more effectually moved by an unseen power.

Man acts, and God acts, in the same operation of body and mind. In the most sublime flights of genius and science, when man numbers the stars, and weighs the planets, he is borne on the strong wing of divine power. "By the inspiration of the Almighty," man displays all the wonderful energy of his intellectual powers. Were the constant agency of God

withdrawn, darkness and death would close the light of the universe.—How this divine operation is consistent with human choice, and human exertion, I do not know; how God constantly acts on the mind, and yet leaves man free and active, I do not know. Still I do know, that the facts are not the less certain. The Holy Spirit, saith the Saviour, will reprove, or rather convince,* the world of sin, that they are guilty, and exposed to the anger of God. This is his work. From the text, and other passages, it is evident, that conviction of sin is one office of the Holy Spirit. The maxims of natural religion, and the exercise of reason, may teach a man that he has sinned. The same reasoning powers, which satisfy him respecting other facts, may instruct him here. But this superficial, indefinite impression of evil, will not effectually excite him to believe in the Saviour, and lead a life of humility and repentance. A man, who has enjoyed a life of perpetual health and gaiety of spirits, may believe that he is a frail, mortal, dying creature; but his convictions are slight, he will rarely submit to the cautious habits of his neighbour, who is pining under painful chronic disorders, and tortured with all the fears of a valetudinarian. So great is the difference between the acknowledgments of reason, and the convictions of conscience, between human teaching, and that of the gospel, enforced by the Holy Spirit. Reason leaves the mind quiet and secure; the Spirit of God awakens the conscience to a deep sense of its sin, and guilt, and danger. The man sees his sin to be rebellion against God,

* See the translations of Thompson and Doddridge, and note of Wakefield.

an odious and abominable work, idolatry of self, putting self in the place of God. He discovers his danger; a dreadful sound is in his ears; Sinai thunders; his sentence is death; in the anguish of his spirit he cries, "What shall I do."

But I ought to be more particular in enforcing the doctrine, that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince men of their wickedness.

This he does, not by a miracle, not by a new revelation, not by dreams or visions; but by the preaching of the gospel. This is the great engine of conviction, and even of conversion. "Faith cometh by hearing." But to proceed. Of what sins does the Spirit of God convince men?

I. He convinces them of the sinfulness of their *immoral* actions. Though all men allow that immoral actions are wrong, and perhaps have some slight impressions, that they are themselves guilty; yet if gospel truth be not impressed on the conscience, if the Holy Spirit have not reproved or convinced the mind, its sense of guilt is inconstant, indefinite, and superficial. Though the man has trampled on the laws of society; though he has broken the law of God; though he has injured his neighbour, violated his promise, betrayed the confidence of his friend, and disturbed the peace of the community, he often feels but little remorse, little self-reproach, little sense of guilt or shame. Notwithstanding his violations of law, human and divine, he often congratulates himself for his virtues, boasts of his goodness, and thanks God that he is so much more religious than his neighbours.

But when the Spirit of God comes, when the Spirit reproves, or convinces him of sin, he perceives that his guilt is great, bold, and daring. He is ashamed and confounded; the plague of his heart, the sins of his life, are an overflowing fountain of moral poison. The streams have polluted the neighbourhood; his example is abroad; he has encouraged others in their wickedness; he has grieved and afflicted others, better than himself; he has made dangerous impressions, which he cannot efface, inflicted wounds in society, which he cannot heal; done a damage, which he cannot repair. His iniquities are as a pestilence walking in darkness. He is ready to exclaim, "I perish; Father, I have sinned."

II. The Holy Spirit convinces the conscience of the guilt of those actions which are *apparently* moral and good.

With all his sins, the man had, probably, done many things apparently right and good; the worst man performs a multitude of such actions. He had been industrious. He had not been an angel of discord, a nuisance in society, the shame of his family; he had not blasphemed his God, nor slandered his friend. Temperate and sober, he had read his bible, and come to the house of God. In all these things did he manifest any spiritual life, any love to God, any holy aspirations for the divine favour, any contrition of heart for sin? He came to the house of God, and so did the useful animal, which drew him in his carriage. But as neither of them had any pious motives, any faith in Christ, any principle of obedience, any regard

to the glory of God, any holy desires for sanctifying mercy, they have no claim to the divine blessing, no title to the smallest reward.—The morality and religion of the man had been his pride, his hope, his confidence; but the Spirit of God has come and convinced him that these services rested on no proper basis, that they were excited by no religious motives, that they were heartless, cold, and dead. He had been moral; but this was constitutional indifference, or the habit of education, or the slavish fear of punishment. He had been, apparently, religious; but this was to be seen of men, or to purchase heaven at the price of his prayers and sacrifices. The fear of God was not before his eyes, nor the love of God in his heart. In coming to the place of public worship, his heart was not in the duties contemplated. True, he brought his body; but his heart was not here. So he might have sent his coat or cloak; but would this have made his garments religious, or given them a claim to the divine favour? In all these plausible services, he was governed by his own interest, his reputation, or his safety. The Spirit of God comes, and convinces him of this truth. He therefore renounces his confidence in his own righteousness, his opinion of his own goodness, his flattering expectation of future reward. As he had no regard for God, he has no claim to his favour. He laboured, not for God, but himself, and has received his reward. Instead of pride, he feels remorse; instead of self-complacency, he is smitten with terrour; instead of delusive hope, his heart is sinking in despair. He is confounded, in view of his best services, that he so disregarded his Maker.

his law, and his gospel. The wisdom of the flesh, the best services of the selfish heart, are enmity against God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Design or intention is essential to every moral action. As the moral character of the intention is, such is the action. When the intention is worldly or selfish, nothing morally good can be predicated of the action. The stream may as well rise above the fountain, or a bad tree bear good fruit, as an action sustain a character superiour to the motive.—When the conscience is enlightened and convinced by the Spirit of God, this is clearly and impressively seen. How miserable is the man. He had thought himself wise and good; that he had kept his garden, and that the fruit was rich and abundant; but the shining of truth has scorched every flower, and blasted every plant. His gold has become dross; he is poor indeed.

III. The Holy Spirit enlightens the conscience, to see the sin of unbelief, the guilt of rejecting the Saviour. "He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me." No man can give proof of love or obedience to Christ, unless he cheerfully accept his favour. He, who disregards a proffered favour, grossly abuses the kindness of his benefactor. Not only the cheerful giver, but the cheerful receiver, is beloved of God; "to enjoy is to obey." Assistance in distress is precious, in proportion to the distress; the wickedness of rejecting such assistance is correspondingly great.

Finding ourselves guilty, and judged, and condemned, and ruined, the salvation of the gospel ought

to be welcomed by us, with joy, thanksgiving, and praise; its abundant grace and goodness ought to swell the heart with love, and faith, and admiration; to satisfy, delight, and ravish the soul.

Yet obstinate unbelief, unmoved, rejects the pardon and redemption offered, disregards the gift of eternal blessedness, hardens the heart against the terrours of everlasting punishment, adds sin to transgression, till she wearies herself in committing iniquity. Unbelief denies the fact of our sinful and lost state; denies that we are dependant on the sovereign grace of God; that we have no help in ourselves; that we are for ever destroyed, without an interest in the atonement. Unbelief denies the necessity of the Saviour's blood, with all the wonderful circumstances of redeeming love. She denies the insufficiency of her own righteousness, and the vanity of her worldly hopes. She refuses to make any preparation for a better world, for the departure of the soul from friends, from the means of salvation, for the day of judgment, or the unknown wonders of immortality. She sleeps away the summer of life, and in the winter of death awakes to misery and ruin.

This is the prominent sin, which the Holy Spirit impresses on the conscience. He reproves men, because they believe not on Jesus Christ; because they neglect a Saviour so excellent and meritorious. Is not this a sin of a crimson dye? Does it not argue an entire want of gratitude, and of every christian grace? Does it not show that the heart has no sense of divine goodness or mercy, no value for the redemption, which has been wrought, for the atonement

which has been made? Hard must be the heart, dark must be the mind, seared must be the conscience, which remains unmoved, unaffected, on hearing the gracious offers of redeeming love. This conviction the Holy Spirit fastens on the conscience, pierces the soul with the anguish of guilt. Unbelief is a sin of presumption—for soon it may be too late to believe; in a moment it may be too late to ask for mercy. Still, unbelief presumes to make light of heavenly glory, to trifle with immortal happiness, to treat God himself as false to his word, defying the thunders of his wrath, sporting with the torments of the damned. Is not unbelief a sin of desperation? It rejects the *only* remedy. There remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. Another foundation can no man lay. It is a refusal to perform the only act, which can save the soul; it is extinguishing the only light, which can guide us to glory; it is pouring on the ground the last drop from the cup of life; it is shivering the only plank, which will waft us over the Jordan of death. —No wonder then, that when the Holy Spirit convinces the conscience of such desperate wickedness and danger, it should wring the heart, and the soul should cry, "What shall I do?"

IV. The Holy Spirit convinces the man of his opposition to the divine law.

In his previous superficial manner of contemplating religious subjects, he might consent, that the law was holy, just, and good.—Though he had sometimes, knowingly, violated its commands, still it was an object of his dread and veneration. He now learns, that he had not known himself, that respect and affec-

tion are not the feelings of his heart. His heart resists, his heart recoils from the law, as too strict in its commands, too dreadful in its sanctions. The lamp of divine truth has enlightened his mind; his disobedience and rebellion are made manifest. His professions of respect for the law vanish. Like Cain, he cries, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Like Adam, he wishes to hide himself from God. The harp, and the viol are no longer pleasant; a merry song in such a solemn scene only heightens his distress; his heart trembles; sometimes his limbs shake with terrour, while the law thunders "cursed is every one who continues not in all things written in the law to do them." He has learned that the law is not obeyed by external observance, without the heart.—He has not kept the law. It condemns him in every sentence. He can echo the words of the psalmist, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts. My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread." Sometimes the intellect is distracted, and he may again repeat the words of David,—"While I suffer thy terrours, I am *disturbed.*" Say, my friends, have you not seen this picture? Have not *your* minds been agitated like the troubled sea? Often, such are the effects by the divine Spirit.

V. The Spirit of God convinces man of his opposition to divine sovereignty, to providence, and the government of God.

By the sovereignty of God, I do not mean any supposed arbitrary proceedings, which do not rest on reason and wisdom for their basis. By the sovereignty of

God, I intend that independence of wisdom, by which he does all his pleasure, and gives not account of any of his matters. Nothing more is, or can be intended, by any rational christian, than that wisdom of power, by which God made and governs the world. He made one star to differ from another in glory. One is beautiful to the naked eye; another can be seen only by a powerful telescope. Angels are more glorious than men. Men differ in genius, in science, in felicity, and honour. One is enlightened, and sanctified, and seems to walk with angels, on the threshhold of heaven. One is rich, and riots in pleasure. Another is poor, and ignorant, and vicious, a brother of dragons, and a child of wrath. One is a savage; another is a saint. The kingdom of God ruleth over all, and of the same lump forms one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour.—"Not so," exclaims the aspiring heart of man.—"Why doth he yet find fault? —I know thee to be a hard master.—Thy ways are not equal."

In the days of Naaman many lepers were in Israel; yet none were selected by God to be healed but this great man. In the time of Elijah, many widows were in Israel, the holy land, inhabited by the people of God; yet to none of these was the prophet sent to supply with provision, and to relieve from distress; but he was sent to a widow of Zarephath, a pagan region, north from the confines of Israel. When Jesus Christ exhibited these facts, to illustrate the sovereignty of God, and to justify himself, for not performing his usual miracles at Nazareth, the people were provoked to madness, drove him from the syn-

agogue, and would have hurled him from the precipice which was near their city.

In his sovereign wisdom, God chose Jacob, and rejected Esau.—Nor am I unwilling to gratify the opponents of the doctrine, by extending this *choice* to the descendants of Jacob and Esau, for this, instead of confining it to one solitary instance, is multiplying the displays of divine sovereignty to myriads, and millions, and millions of examples. Their wisdom and prudence in such a construction of the history, I could never divine. With whom did God take counsel, when he passed by all the sages of the law, all the military chieftains, and from the pastures of Bethlehem, elevated David to the throne of Israel?

While living in pleasure, and regardless of religious truth, a man supposes himself friendly to the divine government, and reconciled to the sovereignty of God; but when the Spirit of God comes, sin revives; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. When the Holy Spirit strives, man for the first time perhaps discovers his alienation from God. He finds himself unwilling that the purpose of God should be executed, that he should do all his pleasure, that his counsel should stand. He knows that he does not cordially say, "Not my will but thine be done." He does not rejoice that God reigns, that he is himself dependant, as the staff in the hand of him who walketh with it. —He is not willing that God should make rich, and make poor, that he should choose some to life, and leave others in the shadow of death. He complains, he resists, he struggles, like a prisoner in chains; like him, he is dependant.

VI. The Spirit of God convinces men of their opposition to the gospel.

The gospel is glad tidings. It is so received by all, who feel rightly, or act well. The gospel presents a redemption already accomplished. "Propitiation" for sin has been made. The blood of atonement has been accepted; yet wicked men, bent on establishing a righteousness of their own, refuse this invaluable favour. From such immense obligations; from such entire and absolute dependance, the heart revolts. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life; how shall I render myself worthy the favour of God; how shall I claim the glory of heaven," is the inquiry of the heart.

That the gospel is not acceptable to the wicked is evident from the incontrovertible fact, that a great portion of the world have rejected the gospel, and where it is most clearly unfolded, only a small portion cordially embrace its doctrines, or obey its precepts. The lowest condition of gospel mercy is repentance. All the self-love, all the pride, all the obstinacy, of the depraved heart, rise up against this duty.—To repent is to be humble. In repenting, the man judges and condemns himself. What can be more abhorrent to the heart? Enlightened by the Spirit of God, the man discovers this self-complacency, and self-dependance, this reluctance to repent and trust in the mercy of God, this unwillingness to be indebted to God himself, for pardon and salvation.

With all the grace which it reveals, the gospel requires men to be holy themselves. To be saved, they must be conformed to the Saviour. Like him

they must deny themselves, be humble, and meek, devout, and charitable; yet all this will not be admitted as the meritorious cause of their salvation. However profitable as servants they have been, they have done no more than their duty, they have conferred no favour.—Here again the heart complains. "It is a vain thing to call upon God." The conscience, enlightened by the divine Spirit, perceives this restless, complaining temper. The gospel requires obedience; yet demands acceptance as a free gift; it rejects mere external services, requiring faith, and holiness of heart; it offers reward of grace, and not of debt. This seems hard to the aspiring heart; the gracious gospel seems not a gospel of grace; but a system of hard sayings. Hence so many labourers in the vineyard of the Lord find their message rejected, and utter the melancholy complaint, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

VII. The Spirit of God convinces men of their aversion to the glories of heaven.

No doubt men generally believe that they desire and long for the joys of heaven; that they take delight in the goodness of God; that they love him as a father, and cordially obey him as a master. Many are shocked at the suggestion, that they are the enemies of God, but when the Spirit of God enlightens the conscience, their opinion is changed. Contemplating the divine being, his holiness, and justice, and power, the man discovers the contrariety of character, the opposition of moral feelings, and that he could not be happy in his immediate presence.

Carefully considering the employments of heaven, he is conscious they would be irksome and tedious. Distinctly recollecting who constitute the society of heaven, saints and angels, he is sure they would not be the companions of his choice. From such friends he turns away, having no sympathy in the topics of their converse, no harmony with their dispositions. Mingling in such society, engaging in such employment, under the eye of the holy God, would never rouse his active powers, never awaken the raptures of his heart, never swell the highest notes of his song.

He flies from such a place.—Whither shall he go? Whither turn himself for help and comfort? What shall he do? Gladly would he remain in this world; gladly would he enjoy his immortality in this vale of tears; but here, he cannot stay. The sentence has been pronounced; the wages of sin is death; his moments are flying, his sands are falling; the king of terrours is approaching; his grave is opening. Looking forward, he exclaims, "Who can dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings!" He clings to life; his cup of anguish is full; no sorrow is like his sorrow. Now, if ever, he bows, he yields himself a willing captive of divine mercy. Sin revives, and he dies.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We see why men prefer false doctrines to true, a system of errour to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first process in the influence of truth is painful. The first effect of truth is to turn the attention of man

to himself, to his own heart, his own moral character.

Truth draws the curtain from the naked heart. The lamp of divine truth illumines the dark caverns of the mind, makes manifest its wicked dispositions. The man is disappointed concerning himself; he sinks in his own estimation; he is not so good, so secure, as he had believed himself to be. This is painful, humbling, distressing; he turns away; he recoils from such a view, he wishes for "another gospel" The gospel of Christ requires holiness; it does not accommodate itself to our wishes or passions; but errour is indefinitely various, assumes every hue, may be adapted to every taste, to every complexion of human character. God may be represented as all mercy, and a holy life a course of pleasant indulgences.—Heaven may be described as a mahometan paradise, a region of perpetual spring, of flowery gardens, and melodious song. The burning lake, whose fires will never be quenched, may be represented as a transient discipline, or its name and existence* may be denied, as the dismal creations, the unreal phantoms, of a disturbed imagination. With such pictures, what eye, never suffused with the tears of repentance, would not be pleased? Who, that yet rolls sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue, would not be better pleased with the imaginary gospel, than the real; with the opinions of men, than with the revelation from God? Where then is the wonder, that the teacher of false principles should be more popular, more caressed, more admired,

* See Balfour's Inquiry.

and better rewarded, than he who announces the humbling gospel of Jesus, and calls on men to repent, and trust in a crucified Saviour for eternal life. Men prefer what gives them present pleasure. False religion has this effect; it produces a spirit of repose and slumber, though in the end, it will be more terrible than the fiery serpents of the Arabian desert. Still, would they submit to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, though alarmed and distressed for a moment, they might be enlightened, and sanctified, comforted, and delighted; the very gospel of Christ would become their support, their hope, their joy, their glory.

II. The subject leads us to distinguish between mere terrours of conscience, and conviction of sin by the Spirit of God. This is an errour not uncommon. Men imagine they have experienced the influences of the Holy Spirit in a remarkable manner, because they have been alarmed, and their affections powerfully moved. For a time they were concerned; they were distressed; they wept, and refused to be comforted. It may reasonably be expected, that where the doctrine of future punishment is believed, that pathetic and terrible descriptions of its miseries, that terrible events of providence, or even the self-reproach of daring sin, will produce such effects on a feeling heart and a tender conscience; but here may be nothing spiritual, nothing religious, any more than in the tears of a tragedy, or the terrours of an earthquake. Yet many individuals, and perhaps some whole sects, on account of such animal affections, believe that they have in a remarkable degree the influences of the Holy Spirit. Hence are adopted all the modes of excite-

ment, which art or enthusiasm can invent, alarming the fears, rousing the terrours, inflaming the passions, and bewildering the imagination, by affecting tones, by violent vociferation, by terrific descriptions of the moving scene round a dying bed, or the pomp and splendours of the great day, the descending Judge, the sounding trump, the rising dead, and all the horrours of everlasting burnings. By such addresses, anxiety and fear are awakened, but is the judgment informed? The passions are moved; but is the conscience convinced? The heart is palsied with terrour; but is the understanding enlightened? The winds blow and the rocks are rent; but do you hear one whisper of the Holy Spirit?

Truth is the medium of divine operations; the Holy Spirit breathes in the gentle voice of gospel doctrine, convincing the soul of sin; because the Saviour is rejected, his laws disobeyed.—Hence may we learn to distinguish between the disturbance of the passions, and the convictions of the conscience by the Holy Spirit. Mere excitement passes away, like the brook of a summer's shower, having produced only a temporary reformation, resulting from agitation and distress. The divine Spirit is permanent in his effects, as the shining of the sun, increasing like the river of the distant mountains, conveying comfort, cheerfulness, joy, and glory.

III. We learn from the subject, why so many persons deny the doctrine of man's depravity; why so many never view themselves so wicked, as this subject represents them to be.

The Spirit of God has not convinced them; his light has not illumined their minds. Having some information from various other sources, they confess they are not precisely what they ought to be, that they are not what they wish to be, that they are very imperfect. But they have no belief, nor conception of such dark depravity, of being altogether in sin, of being the enemies of God, of his law, his gospel, and government. Probably, this arises from a want of perfect self-knowledge, from not being enlightened and convinced by the Holy Spirit; for sometimes, these very persons, without having fallen into any new course of sin, and without being guilty of any glaring immorality, change their opinions respecting themselves, and make as humble, as abasing confessions of sin and guilt, as any men in the world.—Such was Saul of Tarsus. As to the law blameless, he lived in all good conscience. But when the commandment came, when the Spirit of God enlightened his conscience, he found himself the chief of sinners. In the extreme guilt, and remorse, and self-reproach of his heart, he cries out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Had not the Holy Spirit enlightened his mind, he might have continued to justify himself, denying that depravity of heart, which myriads feel, and confess. When those, who reject this doctrine, shall experience as deep and powerful convictions as St. Paul, then may they like him bemoan their guilt and danger.—Till then they may feel themselves as good as the young man, who came to Jesus Christ to

be directed in the way to heaven. He had not openly violated the commands of God, and therefore concluded, that he had obeyed them, according to their spirit and design. So do they. He, in consequence of his supposed goodness, considered himself prepared for the kingdom of heaven. So do they. But when the Spirit of God comes, when the torch of divine truth enlightens the dark recesses of their minds, when they discover the spirituality and extent of the divine law; when they see it extending to their secret thoughts, their wishes, their inclinations, and motives, then will they learn the plague of their own hearts, the crimson depravity of their lives.

IV. If the Spirit of God produces such sense of guilt, is it strange if they seek relief and comfort from every means, which may flatter their hopes?

The pressure of great distress is ever unfavourable to correct judgment, and sound discretion. Too much weight or pressure on a machine impedes its wonted operations; so the burdened mind does not turn and examine evidence with its usual prudence and sagacity. As frost stops the current of a river, so intense anguish obstructs the course of thought, the proper movements of the mind.

When the Spirit of God comes with efficacy and power, the anxiety and distress are often violent and terrible. The person sees a naked human heart; he sees himself. No wonder then that he reads, and hears, and prays, and inquires the way of every man he meets; that he explores every avenue of hope, and knocks at every door of escape. The pressure of his anxious fears and terrours racks and disorders the

understanding, and relief is sometimes sought without much discretion or judgment. Like the psalmist he may almost say, "While I suffer thy terrours I am *distracted.*"

A conviction of guilt, a sense of danger, a fear of divine wrath, an overwhelming apprehension of everlasting misery, produces probably the most insupportable agony the mind of man ever endures in this world. No terrour is like this terrour; no misery is like this misery. Is it very strange then, that such persons should seek relief by every means, which accident may present, or fancy conceive? Is it very strange if sometimes, they "heap to themselves teachers," and listen to bold declaimers, boasting of visions and revelations; is it strange if sometimes they embrace the opiate of errour and delusion, to quiet the anguish of a troubled conscience?

Let all such afflicted souls share in your Christian sympathy, your faithful advice, and your fervent prayers.

V. If such be the terrours of conviction, no wonder the soul is joyful, when first delivered, when first she experiences the consolation of hope, and the spirit of adoption.

When the soul, shut up to the faith, first bends and bows to the authority of God, when the heart embraces him as her father, her saviour, and her portion, slavish terrours vanish, faith lifts her eye, hope kindles delight, peace and joy enliven the heart. Instead of resistance and rebellion, the heart yields itself resigned to the will of God; instead of striving and struggling against Omnipotence, she casts her

burden upon the Lord, and looks to him for all she desires.

The dark cloud is gone from Sinai; the Sun of righteousness shines; the thunders are silent; the lightnings cease to blaze; the earth no longer trembles; the heart no longer quakes with terrour. A feeble hope that God is reconciled, a weak faith in Jesus Christ, faint evidence of salvation, shed tranquillity and peace on the soul. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Well may such a soul say, "The Lord hath done great things, for which I am glad. Come all ye, who fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and has not put my soul to shame. I have sown in tears, I reap in joy." Is this reality, or am I like them, who dream? What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits? Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord forever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XX.

PSALM xviii, 30.

As for God, his way is perfect.

PSALM xix, 7.

The law of the Lord is perfect.

The "way" of God refers to his providence. To say that his *way* is perfect, is to justify his government, his providential dispensations.

The "law" of the Lord includes the system of revelation, the scheme of mercy, exhibited in the sacred oracles. This revelation is perfect. Nothing can be added, nothing taken away, without evident injury. Revelation and providence being perfect, they must harmonize, they must speak the same language. Doctrines and events must accord, else both would not be *perfect.* Both emanate from divine wisdom; both are salutary in their influence on mankind; both are plain and evident, for all necessary or useful purposes. Yet both, in some respects, are deep, are mysterious, are inexplicable. The same incomprehensible wisdom

of God is manifest in the volume of providence and revelation.

The mystery of *facts* is less noticeable; because the facts are certain and familiar. The most luminous deductions of reason, and even the records of inspiration, do not generally make so decisive impressions on the mind, as the observation of facts. Facts, which strike the senses, we are compelled to admit, however mysterious and unaccountable, while speculative truths, which are not more mysterious, are met with doubt, with resistance, with disbelief.—The most unlearned believe that the sun and moon are eclipsed, though they know not how. The learned believe that showers of stones, and sometimes huge masses of stone, have fallen from the clouds, though this is to them an impenetrable mystery. So do the word and providence of God harmonize.

I proceed to show that some of the most important and difficult doctrines of revelation, are supported by the events of providence.

I. Revelation teaches the being of God; so do the events of providence. "I, I am God, and there is none else." "God created the heavens and the earth." Now look at the events of providence. Do they not, with ten thousand tongues, proclaim the existence of God? Do not the exact rising and setting of the sun, the regular return of summer and winter, demonstrate the existence of Deity? In one word, look at the marks of *design*, and *wisdom*, on the open face of creation, marks visible in every object, from the smallest atom, to the greatest globe of heaven, and then say if these are not preserved and directed by an almighty,

intelligent being. Here then the word and providence of God unite and support each other.

II. Revelation declares that man has rebelled against God, and is a sinful creature. "All have gone out of the way—none doeth good, no not one." If all had not sinned, why should Christ make propitiation for the sins of the world? Why should the gospel of mercy be addressed to all, if all had not sinned? Is not this doctrine supported by providence? Look at the events of providence. Are you not confirmed in the doctrine of human depravity? Whether you contemplate the treatment which man receives from his Maker, or the conduct of men towards one another, you are equally convinced that sin universally prevails. Would the God of goodness let loose tempest, and earthquakes, pestilence, and death, on a race of innocent and holy beings? Do angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, encounter these calamitous events? Why are the best disciplined countries furnished with jails and dungeons, terrified with penal laws, and punished by judges? Why do men delight in war, and cheerfully endure military burdens, and fight, and murder, till "the mountains are melted with blood?" The base lusts of men are the only solution of these terrible phenomena. So do the gospel and providence of God harmonize, and support each other.

But some may reply, "we object not to the doctrine of depravity; but to the doctrine of native depravity."

To some, possibly, this may seem an unreasonable, if not an impossible doctrine. But unless we adopt

this, how are we to account for that *universal* wickedness, which abounds through the world? Why is it that *none* are entirely good, no not *one?* "By one man sin entered the world and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all, because *all have sinned.*" "Adam begat a son in his own likeness," like himself, a dying, sinful creature. Do not such texts seem to teach, that there was a connexion between the sin of Adam, and the wickedness of his posterity? By the disobedience of that one man, "many were made sinners." He sinned, and his posterity are not innocent. Though his sin was not their sin; for this would be an absolute impossibility; though his sin was not imputed to them; for this would be merciless injustice; yet might not his sin be the occasion of their wickedness? Does not this accord with daily facts, in the course of providence? Is it not a familiar fact, that wicked men are made wicked by the vicious examples of others? Is it not proverbial, "Like father, like son?" What vicious character is more common, than a profane, idle, intemperate son, of a profane, idle, intemperate father? Have not the sons of Ishmael, retained the character of their father, through all the changes of place and education, for three thousand years? On this principle, have not those men, who associate together, generally a great likeness of moral character? Hence soldiers, and sailors, and other professions, have strong features of moral resemblance. On this principle whole neighbourhoods, and whole nations, have a similar complexion of morals. Why then should it be thought a thing incredible, for the posterity of Adam to be constituted sinners by his sin

and rebellion? If the two cases be not exactly similar, as they confessedly are not, still may not their strong resemblance prevent surprise, and reconcile us to the luminous evidence of revelation? Why might not the sin of Adam be as fatal to his posterity, as the sins of other fathers generally are to their children? If the scriptures do teach the inseparable connexion between the disobedience of Adam and the wickedness of his posterity; if this does not contravene what we witness every day in the malignant contagion of vice; if providence coincides with revelation; if familiar facts, from generation to generation, support and confirm the texts which record the doctrine, why should we doubt, why should we not believe the doctrine? The mode of its being effected, or the wisdom of such an arrangement, is no concern of ours. To ascertain the fact from scripture and providence, is our duty; its righteousness and wisdom God will justify.

III. Revelation teaches that sinful man, to enjoy his Maker's love, must have a new heart, a new spirit and character. Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Does not providence confirm this? Does not the wicked man sometimes "forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts?" Pharisees and sanctimonious hypocrites, prating of their own goodness, may weaken the evidence of experimental religion, but they have not weight of character, to disprove its reality. Many men abandon their infidelity, and believe the son of Mary to be the Saviour of the world; many forsake their vices and crimes, and become penitent and holy. All such are witnesses for revelation. All such, from Adam to the

present day, present so many events of providence, which harmonize with the gospel, and sustain the doctrine of regeneration.

IV. The gospel is believed to reveal the doctrine of future punishment for sin. Do not events of providence in this world confirm the doctrine?

"The wicked shall be turned into hell—these shall go away into everlasting fire. Their worm shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched."

Objections have been made to this doctrine; but they come from a very interested quarter. The judge seldom finds the prisoner very impartial in his view of the law. Can we not then appeal to a more impartial authority? May we not consult the legislator himself? May we not learn the intent and meaning of the sentence, by observing whether he, in any degree, ever puts it in execution before our eyes? Let us then for a moment survey the treatment, which wicked men, in this world, often receive from God. If any suffer the anger of God in this world, though others escape, this will greatly confirm revelation. If any escape, it may only prove that they are reserved for that punishment, which has already commenced with others. That portion of the Divine conduct, which you are permitted to witness in this life, what you see and hear, may instruct you in your faith respecting future punishment. Glance your eye then far and wide. Alas, you need not, generally, look beyond your own neighbourhood. Look, and say whether God punishes sin *in this world*. Does the intemperate man often suffer pain, and disease, and death, in consequence of his sins? Does the idle and dissolute man, often ex-

perience poverty and shame on this side the grave? Are not here powerful presumptions of a future and more complete retribution? If God begin to punish sin in this life, will not the work proceed in the next? What is there more strange in future punishment, than in what daily passes before our eyes?

Had we never known pain, and disease, and death, and had a volume come down to us from remote antiquity, announcing that in the year of our Lord 1826, our heavenly father would let loose famine, and war, and pestilence; that tempests, and floods, and shipwrecks, would blast the hopes of man; that ten thousand infants would expire in agony every day, would not such a book have encountered as many objections, as the doctrine of future punishment now does? Would not men have inquired, and inquired with overwhelming pathos,—"Will our heavenly Father cause our tender harmless babes to languish, and expire in agony? Will the God of love suffer the helpless mariner to sink in the ocean, while his hands are raised in prayer? Will he water the world with the tears of the widow and orphan?" Yet such things are. They are daily events before our eyes.

We are miserable judges of what Deity ought to do. "We can argue but from what we know." The plan of God is wide as the universe, and lasting as eternity. We see only a point, and for a moment. We have no compass to guide us, but the word of God, and our own observation. We then return to the *fact*. Has God said that he would punish the wicked forever, and is this powerfully confirmed by

daily events? The word and providence of God are perfect, and are in unison.

V. The doctrine of atonement or vicarious sacrifice for sin, seems to be taught in scripture. Do any events, in the course of Divine government, support such a doctrine?

"Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin." "He hath borne our sins, and by his stripes we are healed." "He was made a sin offering for us."

Similar language, in every part of the bible, renders the doctrine unquestionable. Do not unnumbered events and transactions of men accord with this doctrine? God required his people to offer a multitude of sacrifices. These had no efficacy in themselves. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Unless they had reference to a real and meritorious sacrifice, of which they were types and emblems, who can discover wisdom or humanity in these bloody rights? Yet they constituted a great part of the external religion, not only of the Jews, but of all mankind. In what quarter of the globe, have not the stones been piled into altars, what hill has not been wrapt in the smoke of burnt offerings? The blood of innocent victims has streamed from the line to the poles. Referring to such a state of things, the apostle says, "But now, in the end of the world, Christ hath appeared to put away sin, *by the sacrifice of himself.*" Can words make the doctrine of atonement more evident?

Not only in the great concerns of religion, but in the ordinary events of life, the same style of provi-

dence is manifest; daily transactions accord with the strain of scripture, respecting the suffering of one man for another. The substitution of one man's sufferings, for the benefit of another man, is one of the most common events of this world. Why then might not Jesus Christ suffer for the sins of the world? Do not parents constantly suffer anxiety, and self denial, and distress, to support and educate their children? Do not children often suffer from the prodigality or the vicious examples of their parents? Faithful rulers suffer abuse and anxiety for the public welfare. "Uneasy lies the head which wears a crown." Go with the officer collecting the tax to support the alms-house. He receives a great portion of the money from families, who labour harder, and who endure more privations, than those persons, whom they support, ever did for themselves. They are made to suffer for those, who would never suffer for themselves. Do not the healthy suffer for the sick; the living for the dying? Do not these events strongly resemble atonement for sin? Why then will any object to the sufferings of Jesus Christ for lost man; why might he not redeem a lost world? He suffered willingly; he *gave* himself a ransom for many. Here then the providence of God agrees with the word of God: both are perfect, and the word receives support from the course of providence.

VI. A considerable portion of the christian world believe that they have discovered the doctrine of election to eternal life on the sacred page. Is this supported by the course of providence?

They do not doubt whether the scripture speaks of those who are chosen to eternal life "through the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." That some are chosen vessels they cannot disprove. That some are forechosen, and predestinated to eternal life, seems to them the evident import of the sacred page. It is also believed that common events of providence are in unison with this doctrine of the gospel; that in this point also, revelation receives support from divine government. An appeal to facts may readily solve the question. Does God then daily, in his providence, make *distinctions* among men? Are some 'chosen' 'few' more rich, more learned, more happy, than their neighbour? May it be replied, that this is generally the effect of more diligence, more study, more virtue? So are those, who are 'elected' and 'saved,' generally more virtuous, more faithful in their lives. But we will not avail ourselves of this advantage. I might ask who made all these individuals to excel their neighbours. But if I can adduce only one instance, and especially if I can adduce innumerable instances of eminent divine favours, without any special merit or exertions, these will be so many unisons with election to eternal life.

Does not God in his providence, in ten thousand instances, highly distinguish persons by his favours, who have no peculiar excellence, and without any regard to their merit? Doubtless he has some wise reasons, though they are unknown to us. This is placing the doctrine in its most obnoxious form; and

in this form, we presume to say, it receives countenance from the general course of providence.

Probably no person in this country attaches the least personal merit to the circumstances of a man's birth. No child is better or worse, born in a palace or a shed. No matter whether he be "below the dome, or above the hut." Yet on this single circumstance of birth, commonly depend, in a great measure, the knowledge, the religion, and happiness of the person. One is born in the cottage of vice, and endures hunger and cold, and generally, though not always, exhibits the vice and ignorance of his father. Another is born in the sober mansion of piety and knowledge, and often, though not always, acquires the knowledge, the virtue, and happiness of his parents. One poor babe, without any fault of his own, is born in Africa, and is a slave.—Another, receives existence in the wilds of America, and of course is a pagan, and a savage. Another first sees the light in Arabia, and spends his life following his flocks from one spring and pasture to another, often scorched with the burning winds of the desert, often mad with hunger and thirst, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, a robber on the land, and a pirate on the sea, Mahomet his prophet, and the koran his bible.

You are born in a christian land, of christian parents, who are faithful and kind, who instruct you by precept and example, to be a disciple of Jesus. What an immense difference is here made, by the providence of God, between man and man. Is not here a display of divine sovereignty, disregarding all

personal merit, as evident, as in election to eternal life? Indeed, where can you look, and not witness a manifestation of this divine attribute? Who gave to Buchanan his spirit of sacred enterprise, to the apostolic Elliot his willingness to labour for the salvation of savages, to Whitefield his overwhelming eloquence, to Edwards his fervent piety and wonderful energy of mind? Does not God in his providence, as well as his word, say, "I will do all my pleasure, and my counsel, it shall stand?" His word and his providence agree, and are perfect. He is of one mind in the kingdom of grace and providence, in the events which we witness, in the doctrines which we read.

With a single reflection or two, we close the subject.

I. We obtain no relief by rejecting the deep and difficult doctrines of revelation.

Though you blot them from your creed, providence spreads them before your eyes, sounds them in your ears, reveals them from every quarter. Though you erase them from your bibles, they are written in capitals on every page of providence.

Many doctrines, as matters of speculation, are difficult and hard to be understood in all their connexions; yet as matters of *fact* revealed, which is enough for us, they are as easily believed as other matters of fact. In many respects, facts are as inexplicable as the most abstruse doctrines.—The doctrine presents no more difficulty, than the fact, which accords with the doctrine. No more difficulty attends the doctrine of atonement, than the familiar event,

that the son suffers misery from the depravity of his father. With their incomprehensibility, we have no concern.—This belongs to God. What then is gained by rejecting the most mysterious doctrines? They are written not only in the sacred oracles, but on your fields and walls, on your garments, on your foreheads, and the doors of your houses. Providence and revelation are two sacred volumes, which give the same account of God, and of his dealings with men.—Though we reject the doctrines of one volume, the other, in a voice louder than all the winds of heaven, proclaims the same divine truths.

II. I infer that a careful observation of providence may confirm our belief in the doctrines of revelation. Do you ever doubt whether the sufferings of the Saviour could be the redemption of sinners? Then recollect how often the cares and peaceful sentiments of a sovereign, might save his subjects from the misery and horrours of blood and war. See hospitals and seminaries rise; see nations and countries enlightened and sanctified, by the sacrifices of benevolence. It seems to be a principle of the divine government, which keeps the machinery of the world in motion, that a part of mankind should endure sufferings in behalf of their brethren.

Do you doubt whether God will punish the wicked? See how many do not live out half their days. Do you question whether God chooses some to be vessels of mercy? Behold Joseph, and David, and Daniel, in sacred story. In civil and ecclesiastical history, read the lives of Alfred, of Edward VI. of Wickliff, of Luther, and Knox. Who selected

these luminaries of the world? Who appointed them their high stations, in the kingdoms and churches of the world? Who gave them their astonishing powers of mind, their grace, and their intellectual empire over the hearts of men?—Such is the accordance of divine truth, collected from different sources. Who then will not believe? With the mystery of divine truth, again I say, you need not perplex your minds. With explanations and solutions of profound doctrines, you need nor try the strength of your intellectual powers. Your duty is prayerfully and teachably to inquire, "What doth the Lord God say in his word?" Having discovered this, believe and embrace it with all thine heart. Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know, the truths of revelation. Take, then, fast hold of instruction; keep her, for she is thy life. She will bring thee to honour; she will give thee an ornament of grace, and a crown of glory.

SERMON XXI.

PSALM cxxxviii, 2.

For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

MANY things are lowered in our estimation, from being constantly enjoyed, or easily acquired. The water of the fountain, and the salubrious atmosphere, though essential to life, are received with feeble emotions of gratitude.

The word of God, as far back as our minds can remember, has been open before us, its precepts are familiar, its doctrines are believed; and we hardly recollect that this knowledge was not born with us, or that all the human race have not the same instruction.

To estimate the value of revelation, we must, in idea at least, visit the benighted pagans, witness the moral blindness of their minds, the dismal scenes of their polluted worship, their ignorance of God, and of divine truth. Go, hear the savage hold frantic converse with invisible spirits; or listen to the shrieks of the innocent babe, from the altar of Moloch. Now, tell us the value of revelation.

What then are some of the advantages of revelation?

To answer this inquiry, attending to such reflections as may occur, is our present design.

I. One great and decisive advantage of a revelation from God, over every other method of moral instruction, is its high authority. Here, revelation stands unrivalled. Much instruction may be communicated from man to man. From the resources of his own mind, from his own experience, from his observation abroad, man has often been a luminary of instruction. Poets and philosophers have reasoned well, respecting the rewards of virtue, the punishments of vice, the being, and attributes of God. But what practical influence followed? Who were made wiser or better? These, and other truths, were like a splendid palace, rising on a hill of moving sand. No confidence could be placed in their permanency. They were only the opinions of men. They might be true, they might be false. They allured the fancy, but they gave no pledge to the understanding. Like the brilliant meteor of midnight, they roused admiration; but afforded the pilgrim no safe guidance, in the journey of life.

Though they were men of powerful intellects, of splendid conceptions, of profound research; yet they did not satisfy or convince themselves. Cicero, and Socrates, and Plato, repeatedly express themselves in the greatest perplexity and doubt, respecting the most important docrines of religion. Not so is it with the heralds of revelation. Their first sentence is, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah." "I come to

thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." They not only say this, but prove it. By their miracles, by the fulfilment of their prophecies, by other convincing circumstances, it is proved, that pious men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They proved that they were sent of God, that they were his messengers, to instruct and reclaim a lost world. Here is firm ground; here is solid rock. We know, blessed be God, in whom we believe. We know that we are not following cunningly devised fables.

The common people of Palestine, in a moment, perceived the difference between those teachers, who uttered their own opinions and notions, and the oracular voice of Him, "who spake as never man spake." He spoke as one having authority. This is the safety and comfort of those, who receive the word of God; they have divine authority for what they believe.

II. Another advantage of revelation is its evident import, its plain meaning.

Arguing from the cause to the effect, I boldly infer that a revelation from God must be plain and evident. A revelation, not intelligible is no revelation; nothing is revealed. Would God abuse his creatures with unintelligible propositions? Would he speak to them in an unknown tongue? Religious truth is ever the same, and ever distinct from falsehood.

To all this, will you oppose the incontrovertible fact, that a multitude of opinions exist? To this I make as simple a reply. Elevate the moral feelings of all men to a suitable and similar standard, and we shall hear but few complaints respecting the obscurity

of revelation. But while men have such discordant tones of moral feeling, and such different degrees of intellectual improvement, we must expect jarring opinions, and hostile creeds. The fault is not in the standard, but in those, who estimate the standard. Still, with all our ignorance, and prejudices, and parties, and creeds, and systems, it requires an effort of depravity, to explain away the great and leading doctrines of the bible. While the responses of the pagan oracles were generally ambiguous and equivocal, what is more evident than this great lesson of the sacred volume, Man has revolted from his God?

Will you say this is so evident on the face of society, as to need no revelation to confirm the fact? However palpable the fact may be to us, however irresistible the evidence, it is, after all, fully and distinctly learned only from the sacred oracles. The nature and extent of this moral mischief is taught nowhere but in the word of God. The heathen have had some superficial and vague impressions that human nature was in a disturbed and disordered state; but these obscure impressions were probably conveyed to them by tradition, from some ancient revelation.

Men, who never heard, that the race was once in a more pure and upright state, who have never heard that they ought to be more moral and pious, who have never heard an expectation of future improvement, think little more of reproaching themselves or others, for their moral obliquities, than of accusing the stars for not being luminous, as the sun and moon.

Because certain truths have been familiar from our infancy, we are apt to imagine they might have been known without a revelation. What truth is more evident than that the world was created by God? Every Tyro in science can demonstrate this truth. Yet man, with all his sagacity, did not originate this belief. "By faith," faith in the word of God, "we believe that the worlds were made." Had not this fact been revealed, it had never been known. Men would never have supposed, that the sun had always shone; that the sea had always dashed its billows on the shore; the forests always spread their shade over the land. From revelation alone we learn that "by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." Though pagans have worshipped lords many, and gods many, though the hills have echoed their cries and prayers, and the heavens been darkened with the smoke of their sacrifices; yet no part of this splendid worship was designed to mend or reform the worshippers. In their numerous prayers, they do not ask to be made better. They thanked the gods for the common blessings of life; but ascribed all the praise to themselves for any progress in good dispositions.

A sense of sin, a broken heart, are not among their sacrifices. Our wickedness, a radical doctrine of revelation, is fully learned only from the word of God. Here it is announced with power and authority.

Redemption from this sin and guilt, is another undeniable doctrine of revelation. This is the key-stone of the arch, the main pillar in the temple of rev-

elation. The seed of the woman, the babe of Bethlehem, the cross of Calvary; here is the hope of man. When man first awakes to his guilt and danger, he discovers no other means of deliverance. The light of philosophy shows him not the path of life. Neither Mahomet, nor Confucius, nor Brahma, restore peace to his mind. But in the first page of revelation, the light of redemption dawns; it kindles, and sheds a radiant glory through the sacred volume. The first sound is life from the dead. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The light shines brighter and brighter, till we hear the triumphant Redeemer say, "I have finished the work; I have made propitiation for the sins of the world." No other religion makes such a claim, or is supported by such evidence.

The means of securing this redemption is another evident and essential lesson, which we learn from the word of God. In vain are the most opulent treasures opened before us, unless we are taught the mode of securing them. In vain is the luxurious banquet presented, unless we are taught the mode of access. The path of life, the way of wisdom, is plainly drawn on the sacred page. The real christian must believe the doctrines of his great Redeemer. To pretend that you follow the light of the gospel, that you are a disciple of Jesus, while you adopt the doctrines of Mahomet, or the grand Lama, is absurd, as it is impious. Yes, would you be benefited by the gospel, would you inherit the salvation of the gospel, you must *believe* the gospel, you must cordially embrace all its doctrines, as far as you can understand them. Some

may be hard to be understood; some may require more moral discipline, and culture of the mind, than you can attain. Here, as in all other cases, it is required of a man according to what he has, and not according to what he has not. The commands of God, and our abilities, are precisely parallel. Whatever doctrines we discover, we must adopt. It is not for us to imagine what doctrines ought to be revealed, nor to enlist under any leader, whom we conceive wiser than his fellows; but to receive the doctrines just as we find them in the word of God.

To secure the benefits of redemption, a man must not only believe, but obey the instructions of the gospel. As the legislator of his people, Jesus Christ has given his people rules of conduct. The sum of them is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Here a demand is made of the heart, rendering it evident, that no external action, separate from the motives and affections of the mind, in any degree fulfils the law, or answers the demands of the gospel. Indeed mere actions, without the heart, have no moral character. They can be neither good nor bad. We may as well predicate morality on the motion of a planet, as on any action of man, separate from his temper and motives. The duties of piety, which the Saviour has enjoined, are peculiarly incumbent on his disciples. By these, they are distinguished from the professors of other religions. Baptism, and the Lord's supper, are exclusively the rites of christianity. Every man is defective in his claims to christian character, whatever other excellencies he may possess, while he does

not exhibit a practical regard to these ordinances. All these are evident truths, and show that the word of God is plain and intelligible.

III. Another eminent advantage of the bible is, it has a more powerful and salutary effect on the human character, than any other known system of religion. The koran has raised up a race of warriours, who are masters and slaves. The shasters have made a great portion of mankind superstitious devotees. The bible makes men good. Its light renders men wise unto salvation. The book of Moses has survived all other writings of men. The influence of his doctrines has been more completely tested, than any other system. No writings of equal antiquity have come down to us. When you consider that they are not addressed to the fancy, nor designed to flatter the passions, like the poems of Mæonides, or the bard of Mantua, but are powerful appeals to the conscience, raising the voice of reproof against every sin, is it not a wonder, if not a miracle of providence, that they have been preserved and read so long? Wonderful have been the effects of the sacred volume. The most barbarous nations have been civilized, their ferocity has been softened, their morals improved, their character elevated.

Where its influence is very partial, where many vices continue, those vices assume a milder, and more decorous aspect.

Draw a map of the globe, illumine those countries where the human character is most pure, most exalted, and you will find those are the very countries where the bible is most cordially received, and best

understood. In the words of a late writer, "It is a grand subject for meditation, to behold, in our modern societies, the love of the holy doctrines of the gospel advancing with the progress of philosophy, and of political institutions; so that the nations, which are the most advanced in civilization and in liberty, are also the most religious, the most truly christian."*

So does God magnify his word above all other men for perfecting the human character.

REFLECTIONS.

I. If the word of God be given to mankind for such important purposes, then his goodness is manifest in reducing it to writing.

Our religion is not a tradition, though it has been so considered by a celebrated infidel.† The annals of our faith have more proofs of authenticity than the exploits of Cæsar or Alexander. While any species of testimony is respected by mankind, the believers in revelation will feel themselves standing on the rock of eternal truth.

The oracles of God are now brought to the scrutiny of our senses, subjected to our severest investigation, our most elaborate research. Were divine truth confined to the lips of prophets and priests, the sound would strike our ears, and too often, pass away as a tale or a song. We should have little time to consider, to weigh and ponder its importance or meaning. Pretenders would start up in every congregation, and we

* A. Stael. † Gibbon

should be daily called to examine and decide between true and false prophets. Now, we have a standard, "known and read of all men," to which an appeal may be made, by the whole human family.

Instruction is not confined to the act of hearing. Men may read, and understand, and become wise unto salvation. We need not always wait for the holy day, or the great congregation, to learn the will of God. Although shut out from the house of God, you need not remain ignorant of God, or the doctrine of redemption. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth. The will of God is more readily communicated to the whole family of man, in the form of a volume, than orally, from the lips of a preacher. This sacred book goes with every ship round the world, to the ends of the earth. It is displayed not only in the mart of traffic, and in the palace of the prince; but as an angel of mercy, it enters the cottage of the peasant, the cabin of the savage, and the dungeon of the malefactor. Silently it allures the eye, enlightens the mind, quiets the conscience, soothes and cheers the distress of melancholy, whispers peace and consolation in the anguish of sickness and death.

The written word is a fixed and permanent standard of truth. Like its divine author, it has no essential change. Customs and modes of thinking change; theological opinions and doctrines change. Fanatics and philosophers publish their rival systems, and the world goes after them. But the word of the Lord, like the radiant sun, which pursues the same course, and sheds the same light, forever proclaims the same doctrines, the same duties.

As the luminous beacon, on the margin of the deep, guides to the haven vessels of every name and nation, lost in darkness and storm; so the written word of God rises above the atmosphere of contending parties, sheds her splendid glory abroad, allures, and guides, and saves the contending sects, lost in the storms of polemic controversy.

II. If the bible be a revelation from God, then it is the only standard of religious truth.

To suppose there can be more than one standard, is to suppose that divine truth is not every where and always one and the same. To set up reason, as the measure of divine truth, is to multiply its form and character, beyond all calculation. The reason of man often dictates one doctrine in the city, another in the rural village. Reason dictates one doctrine at Rome, and another at London. The change is more violent at Canton and Constantinople. On this principle truth is as various as the climates of the world, or the colour of its clouds.

Will it be said all this takes place with the bible open, the oracles of God sounding? True. But this arises from not understanding those oracles, or from raising some authority above them.

All human systems of divinity, all the laboured productions of human reason, all the creeds and confessions of faith, in all the churches of christendom, have no authority, are sources of errour, unless they accord with revelation. The bible, the bible alone is not only the religion of protestants, but of all who believe its divine inspiration. Every thing different is the device of man, hay, wood, and stubble, which

are to be burned. Other sources of light and instruction are useful; reason herself searches the deep things of God, and brings treasures new and old, from the golden mines of providence and revelation. Still the book of God remains the only standard of religious truth. Sad will be the day, when any great sect shall make their creed equally respected with the scriptures; then may be expected their explanations, like the Mishnas, and Talmuds of the Jewish church, one of which contains twelve volumes folio; every absurdity of which must be believed, or the poor Jew must be branded as a heretic. These they prefer to the scriptures, comparing their bible to water, their talmud to wine.

III. If the scriptures are the only light to guide men to immortality, of what infinite value is religious liberty, the liberty of adopting that faith and worship, which we believe is revealed in the word of God.

If true religion were various and opposite in different churches and countries, we might safely believe with the multitude where we happened to sojourn, worshipping Mahomet at Mecca, and the Lama at Thibet. But if the word of God alone is the word of life, how precious is this word! Unless we may hear, and examine, and believe, according to our own judgment, of what avail is it that prophets have seen visions, and the Son of God announced life and immortality to a dying world?

The very idea of examining and considering a proposition, implies the right of adopting our own construction, and even the right of rejecting it altogether. Why else should we examine? Again; if every man

may not put his own construction on the word of God, who may? Who are the privileged favourites? Those, who are right, and sound in the faith? Who are they? The majority? But these are different in different countries, and in the same country, at different periods. Who then shall decide? If one man may not, another, by the same rule, may not. Therefore, no one may adopt any construction of divine truth. Such absurdity follows, from denying universal freedom of religious opinion.

Yet as we have always enjoyed entire freedom of thought and opinion, the evils of religious intolerance appear as airy dreams, to be recorded in the same chapter with ghosts and witchcraft.

But our fathers have told us another tale. They left their country and pleasant homes to ask the boon of living among pagan savages, that they might enjoy their own faith and worship. They were not allowed to hear, nor their pastors to teach, what they devoutly believed.

In the reign of good Edward VI, all preaching was suspended through the kingdom, because the clergy taught a variety of doctrines, that the bishops and clergy might adopt a uniform order, and put an end to all controversies in religion.

We smile at this. To them, it was a sober concern. In the previous reign, it had been enacted, "That all matters of Christian faith, rules and ceremonies, shall be published with the king's advice, and shall in every point be *believed* and obeyed." Also, "that no person should sing or rhyme, contrary to said doctrines." It was also ordered that the bible should not be read

in English, in any church; that no women, artificers, apprentices, or journeymen, shall read the New Testament in English."

Here is despotism, not over the body and property of the subject; but over his mind, his conscience and thoughts. Blessed be God, our fathers burst these chains, and emancipated themselves and us, from this house of bondage. As we invade the religious rights of no man, no man is allowed to invade ours.

In that period, the beams of light from the word of God, dispelling the darkness and delusions of the people, breaking up their violent prejudices, was like the bursting forth of a vernal sun, after a winter of storm, dissolving the frost, and covering the earth with verdure, and blossoms. Now, men worship God in the manner most edifying to their own minds, believing what seems most accordant with the sacred oracles, and doing what seems most *rational.*

IV. If the word of God be so important, then it will be preserved, while the race of man exists.

As the world was created for the support of man, and will be continued while man exists; so the word of God, designed to enlighten and save man, will be preserved, while man remains to read, and be saved. While the world exists, the word of God is safe.

Persecution has often kindled her fires, to consume the holy volume and its readers; but they will survive, as long as the sun and moon shall endure.

Infidelity may despair; her last arrows are shivered; the sword of the Spirit is waved in triumph. As the clouds will distil their showers, while hills and valleys remain to be watered; so will heavenly light

beam from the word of God, while his church continues on the earth. Its sacred leaves are as lasting as the hills; its holy pages will be read, till Sinai shall again be wrapt in flame, and Ararat and Lebanon vanish in the fires of the great day. The word of God, the great instrument of human redemption, will be preserved, till the work of redemption is closed. The fires of persecution have gone out; infidelity is passing away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever.

V. We learn why so great a portion of mankind are still in a state of delusion and moral slumber.

If we traverse the globe, we shall find them generally in a state of moral death. They are strangers to the love of God; the wisdom, which is from above, has never enlightened their minds. Although their religious rites, and sacrifices may be numerous and imposing; yet all is show, and parade, and useless pomp. Their religion does not affect the heart, does not reform the life, does not enlighten the mind, does not elevate the character. If in some instances, they seem to be affected, and absorbed in religious contemplations; if they are awakened and distressed with moral fears, they seek relief, not by a rational worship of God, not by any conformity to his moral excellencies; but by absurd superstitions, by abject penance and self-torture. The numerous pagan rites of the eastern church, and the frantic orgies of the western, are alike removed from all rational religion. Nor is this strange. The grand means for the illumination of man, has not been applied to them. God has magnified his word above every other name; he has made it the great organ of light and goodness in the

world. But this powerful agent is not yet operating on the great mass of mankind. They are not yet enlightened with the great doctrines of revelation,—that God has created the world, that he governs the world, that he has redeemed the world. Their minds have never been roused, and elevated, and sanctified, by these sublime truths. Hence they continue in moral slumber, and degrading superstition. Among these, some sections have made laudable advances in civilization, and been eminent in the arts; still slow and grovelling has been their progress in moral science and religious practice.

VI. If the word of God is so essential, then it is our duty to read, and understand it for ourselves.

The book of God will not operate as an amulet or charm. Mere possession will produce no advantage. We must read, and believe, and obey its precepts. We must imbibe its holy temper and spirit. We must breathe the devotion of its saints and martyrs.

What will be the profit of believing what we do not understand; or of understanding what we do not *practise*.

Implicit faith, without knowledge, is a blind impulse, imbued with no excellence. Therefore, instead of wading through tomes of controversial divinity, read the word of God. Instead of inquiring what the enlightened moderns believe, or what the pious ancients believed, ascertain what the word of God says. He, who attempts to settle his creed by the faith of the present or past ages, will find himself tossed on the billows of the ocean without a helm to guide his bark, without a star to shape his course.

In the first ages of christianity, it was deemed good divinity to believe that none but a few martyrs or confessors would enter heaven till the judgment. In the fourth century, it was thought orthodox to deny the divinity of the Saviour. In the fifteenth century, the protestants generally believed that the soul slept with the body, till the resurrection. In all ages, and in all religions except the protestant, it has been deemed a *pious duty* to pray for the dead.

Will such facts settle a man's creed? If not, they may be useful, *to show him the value of his bible.* Bless God, my friends, for your *bibles;* press them to your hearts; read them, make them the light of your feet, and the lamp of your path.

VII. If the bible be so important, is it not our duty, and a high exercise of benevolence, to send it to those, who are destitute?

Has God in mercy sent us the oracles of heaven, a revelation from the throne of his glory? Do we see the path of wisdom and find it pleasant? Are the lamps of others gone out, while ours are running over? Shall we not impart to their necessities? While our tables are covered, shall we not send portions to those, who are perishing in the high-ways and hedges?

The word of the Lord is as an angel of mercy, opening the prison to them who are bound, and bidding the captive go free.

This, my friends, is our delightful labour. The Lord loveth the cheerful giver. Our natures are social; we proceed in duty, more pleasantly and more easily, when others act in concert to assist us.

Such is the situation of the bible. We are associated with a great portion of the faithful in all christendom. We are moving in concert with the great and good men of the age, with princes and nobles. Kings and emperours are coming down from their thrones to pay their offerings to the Bible Society. Shall not we proceed with zeal and pleasure?

The Bible Society rises like a column of pure light, for the guidance of other benevolent associations. Here they look for help and direction. Though they may be abundantly useful in their appropriate sphere, yet with them are heard all the babbling dialects of all the sects and parties of the christian world.

With us, and the Peace Societies, is but one language, the language of peace, of paradise; the language of pure truth, unmixed with errour. Here names and sects are for the moment all forgotten. Here, the man, who shall say to his neighbour, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," would be viewed as an apostate from the bible corporation.

As the aboriginals of our country have certain places of refuge, which they call White Towns, where no blood is ever shed, where warriours of contending tribes meet in peace and amity; so are the Bible Societies our White Towns.

Here the jarring sound of polemic discord is never heard; here we meet as brethren of the same human family, as children of the same common parent, who has made of one blood all them, who dwell upon the earth. Bible and Peace Societies rest on the broad basis of universal philanthropy.

The contribution proposed is not designed to build up a sect or party, but to spread abroad the pure light of God's word. We come not to you as Missionaries from Rome, or Geneva, or England. We plead not for the Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Congregational denominations; but we plead for man; we plead for God.

Holding up the sacred page, we pray you to give it wings, to fly to the ends of the earth; to give it a voice to be heard in the most distant cottage of the human family. We pray you to commission the prophets and apostles again to go forth from Palestine, to all the nations, and tribes of men. Let the song of angels echo from the fields of Bethlehem, to the forests of America, to the deserts of Africa, "Peace on earth, and good will among men."

What you do in this work, you may be sure is done for God; you become an agent in the work of God.

If for a cup of cold water, you may expect the reward of a disciple, what may you not hope, if you give the word of eternal life, to perishing strangers?

Go on, my friends, in this noble course. While numbers, who commenced this work with us, have gone to receive their reward,—while my repeated addresses on these occasions remind me I can never perform this office again, may you, my hearers, long be preserved, long persevere in the cause of God and human happiness, and finally shine as stars of lustre, in the kingdom of heaven, forever and ever. *Amen.*

ERRATA.

Page	119	line	15	for	*their*	read	*your.*
‘	175	‘	21	‘	*preserves*	‘	*prunes.*
‘	176	‘	23	‘	*look*	‘	*book.*
‘	179	‘	26	‘	*relig-*	‘	*religion.*
‘	238	‘	16	‘	*reviews*	‘	*reviewers*
‘	278	‘	27	insert	*of*	before	*Hum.*